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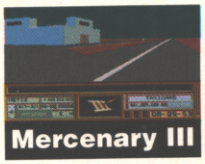
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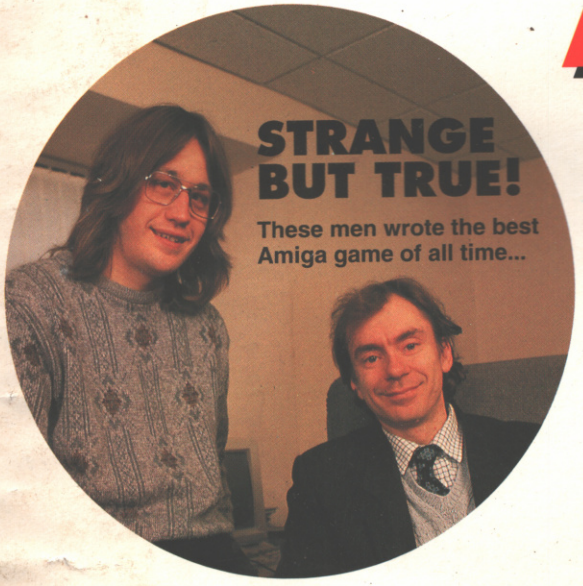

STRANGE BUT TRUE!

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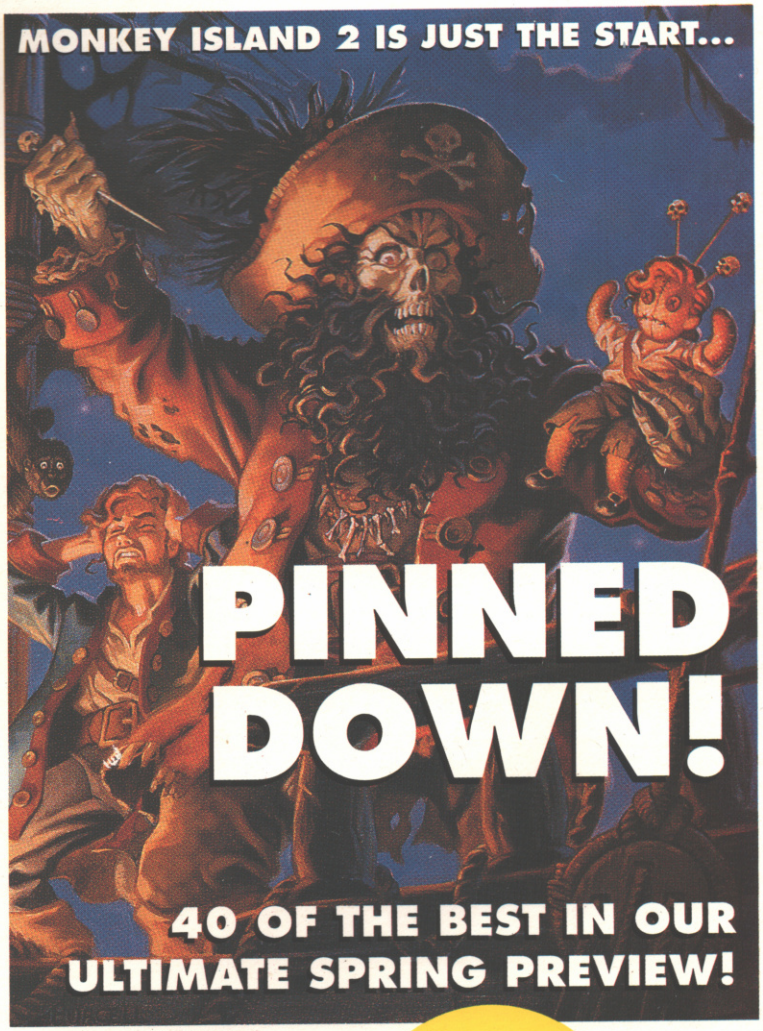

MONKEY ISLAND 2 IS JUST THE START...

PINNED DOWN!

40 OF THE BEST IN OUR ULTIMATE SPRING PREVIEW!

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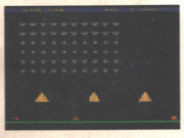
AMIGA POWER DISK 10

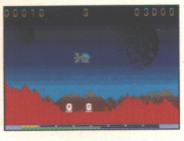
WANT TO KNOW MORE THEN? THEN FLICK TO PAGE 5! →

ARCADE CLASSICS



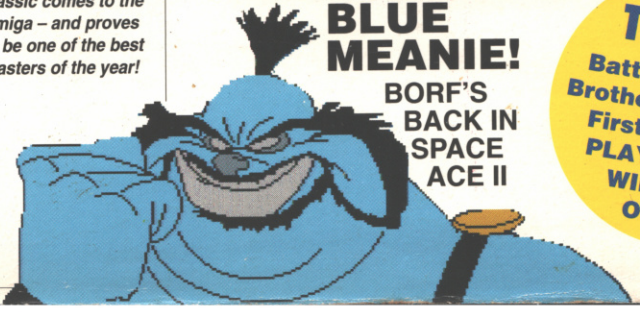
MR WOBBLY LEG VS THE INVADERS FROM SPACE
Ladies and gentlemen, place your bets!

RAID
A massively impressive SEUCK *blaster in the style of* SWIV *– but much, much harder!*



SQUAMBLE
An all time arcade classic comes to the Amiga – and proves to be one of the best blasters of the year!

THE BEST OF AMIGA POWER PD



BLUE MEANIE!
BORF'S BACK IN SPACE ACE II

TIPPED!
Battle Isle, Blues Brothers, Heimdall, First Samurai... PLAY BETTER! WIN MORE OFTEN!

ISSUE 10

THE MARK

CRUISE FOR A CORPSE

AMIGA

CRUISE FOR A CORPSE

Based in the 1920's, Inspector Raoul Dussentier is aboard a ship in the Mediterranean. But no sooner has the cruise begun when Raoul is summoned to investigate a crime - the murder of his host Niklos Karaboudjan, the Greek shiping magnate. It's up to Raoul to throw some light on this sinister mystery!

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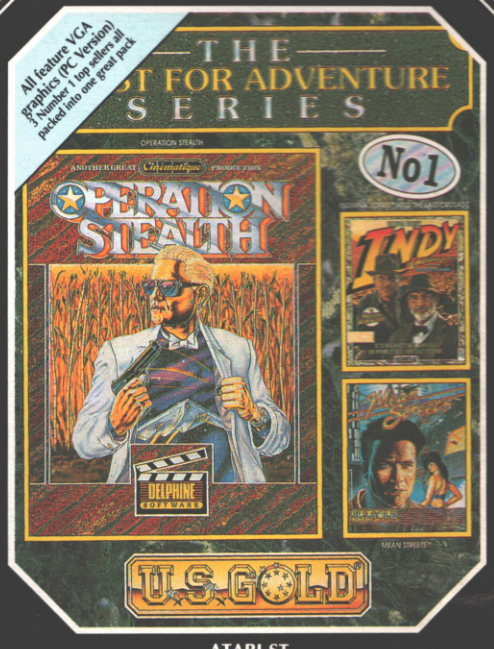

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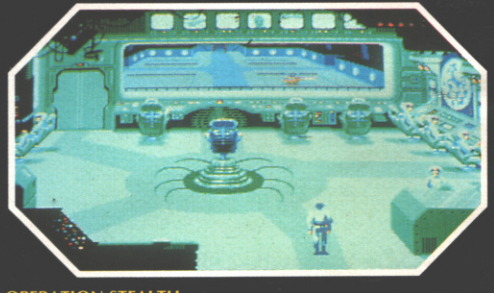

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The Godfather™

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Domination, wealth, power and justice are all part of the game plan. Flex your muscles in the rough and tough world of The Godfather, crushing other Don's scheming plans to take a piece of your action! Nerves of steel and a cool head are needed to keep the bad guys at bay.

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- *Unique graphic interaction sequences.*
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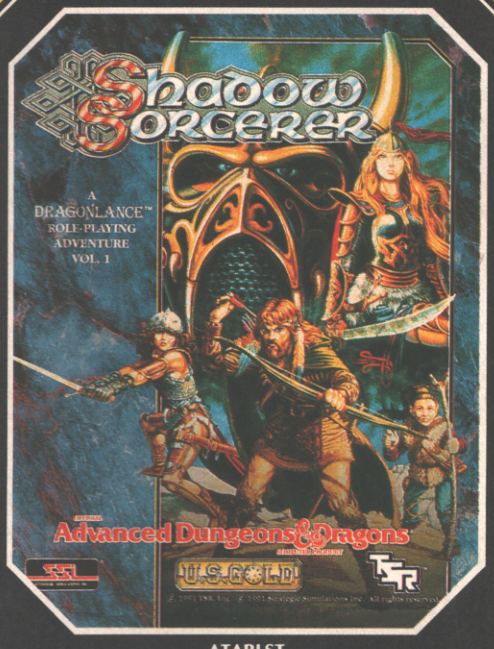
SHADOW SORCERER



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AMIGA POWER
ISSUE TEN FEB 1992

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NEW THIS DEPT: First off, congrats to Mark Ramshaw, who's been newly promoted to Deputy Editor. The search for a new production editor begins here. And hi to Jackie Garford, our new sales girlie who joined us from sister mag Amiga Format, and who actually started last month but we forgot to put her name in this bit. Soz, Jack!

OUR FAVOURITE THINGS: If anyone's interested, here are a few of the things that made our lives bearable over the last couple of weeks. Bug joysticks – we love 'em!; free wine and beer from EA, Ocean, Loriciels, Activision, US Gold and others; Nirvana; Buffalo Tom; Sherbet Lemons, Jelly Babies; Winona Ryder...

THIS MONTH'S COMPO: We want some nice pictures to decorate our office. February has been nominated joint Winona Ryder/Dolph Lundgren month – we want any pictures you can get us of these two top AMIGA POWER sex symbols (Dolph's for the girlies, of course). Best pics – of Winona especially! – win some fabulous, top-notch software prizes. Get snipping!
(By the way, last month's Send-us-some-beer compo is still open. Get with it, people!)

THOUGHT FOR THE MONTH: "What do The Other Two call Barney and Hooky?"

AMIGA POWER comes to you from Future Publishing, home of Amiga Format, Amiga Shopper, ST Format, Your Sinclair, Commodore Format, Amstrad Action, Sega Power, Total!, Public Domain and lots of other ones.
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10 TRUE STORIES
What has happened to Mirrorsoft? What is the secret of Ocean's 'Dongle'? Plus all the hot new games and your favourite regulars.

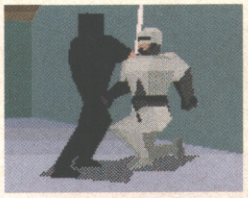
16 THE CHARTS
The uppers, the downers and all that sort of jazz. Just who did make the Christmas Number One?

49 COMPLETE CONTROL
Stuck on your favourite game? Then learn how to play it the AMIGA POWER way. This month, take complete control of *Heimdall*, *Battle Isle*, *Blues Brothers* and more...

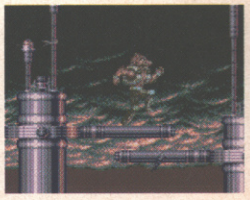
74 IF WE'D KNOW THEN...
This month it's Steve Turner and Andrew Braybrook of Graftgold who take us through their old games. How would they change games like *Rainbow Islands*, *Paradroid 90* and *Realms* if they knew then what they know now..?

92 COMPO WINNERS
Is your name here? If so you could have won one of our big, big prizes..!

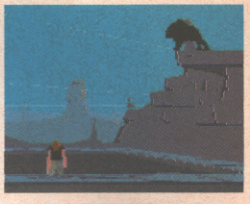
GAMES OF THE MO



ROBOCOP 3
Without any question, the film game of this (or any) year Page 22



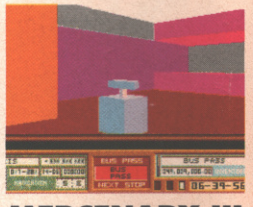
WOLFCHILD
Liked *Switchblade*, did you? Then have we got a treat for you! Page 26



ANOTHER WORLD
Arcade adventures go cinematique Page 32

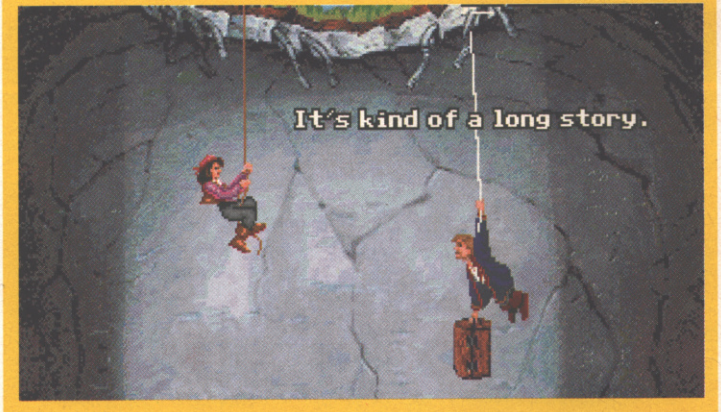
LEANDER
We've seen it all before, and yet, and yet... this time it *works* Page 34

THE GODFATHER
It *looks* like more than a *NARC* clone... Page 36



MERCENARY III
The long awaited *Damocles* sequel is finally here Page 38

60 THE ULTIMATE SPRING GAME GUIDE



The new year is upon us, and with it a whole season's worth of brand new games. Flight sims, strategy epics, arcade-style originals, coin-op conversions – they're all here. Want to know what you'll be playing over the next four or five months? (Not to mention what you'll be studiously avoiding?) Welcome to the Ultimate Spring Game Guide...

96 DEFINITION OF SOUND
This month – driving games. Some are good, some are bad, but most are downright appalling. Pick your way through the minefield with our unique buyer's guide...

101 WIN A LOAD OF CRAP!
It's the compo that hangs its head in shame. (Don't fancy *your* prize much!)

103 DO THE WRITE THING
Sexism in software (sorry about that), epilepsy in the arcades and the longest letter we've ever had – it's all here!

109 THE BOTTOM LINE
Now a massive eight – eight! – pages!

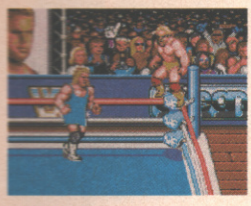
138 SECOND OPINION
Steve Cargill of The Bitmaps – he thinks *SWIV*'s "as good as *Xenon II*."

70 THE GOOD, THE BAD AND THE UGLY!

The best and worst in Amiga game packaging – whether you like it or not, what they put on the front of the box *does* make a difference.

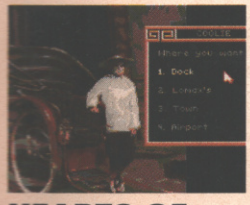
OVER 300
GAMES RATED IN EVERY ISSUE!

MONTH



WWF
Nagasaki's got the salt! He's got the SALT! Are you blind, ref? Page 32

TIP OFF
Basketball gets *Kick Off*-ised. (Well, what did you expect?) Page 42



HEARTS OF CHINA
Or High Road To China, the game... Page 44

SPACE ACE II
Gorgeous graphics but, well... (you know the drill by now) Page 46

SUBS

... and more! Back issues, T-shirts, binders – they're all here! (How can you live without them?) Page 120

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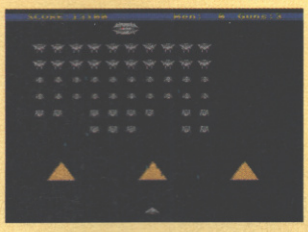
disk TEN

Classic arcade games, eh? Don't you just love 'em? Here at AMIGA POWER we certainly do, which is why we've put this special disk together this month, featuring versions of three of the fabbiest arcade blasters ever. It's a real treat for fans of fast reaction games, and if you're not fan then, well, you'll just have to start learning to be one, won't you?

Here, then, is our special this-month-only treat, a whole coverdisk of lovely sexy complete games from the public domain, land of the free. There's top alien-blasting action in 'sort-of' coin-op conversion *Squamble*, some top alien-blasting action in the fiendishly-difficult *SWIV* clone *Raid* and, just for variety, a spot of top alien-blasting action in one of the entries for our issue two 'Win A Job At Bullfrog' competition, the incredible *Mr Wobbly Leg Versus The Invaders From Space...*

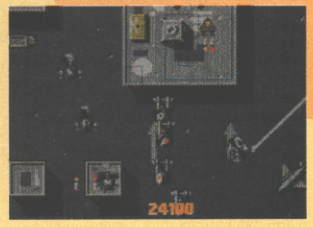
AND THIS IS DISK TEN



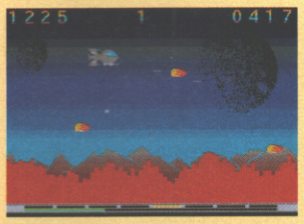
MR WOBBLY LEG

Who could possibly forget *Space Invaders*? In issue two we asked you to put a new slant on the classic *Invaders* theme – the best entry getting the chance of gainful employment with top programmers Bullfrog – and that's exactly what lots of you, our beautiful readers, went and did. See page 92 for more on the competition, but in the meantime here's one of the better efforts, an apocalyptic epic featuring a character who's sure to be the nation's next big cult hero after Bart Simpson and *Sonic The Hedgehog – Mr Wobbly Leg.*

RAID



So you're good at shoot-'em-ups are you? Reckon you could beat *Squamble*? Cruise through *Mr Wobbly Leg*? Feeling a bit cocky? Well then, why don't you pick that joystick back up and try this one on for size? Then we'll all see just how smart you are... Sort out the men from the boys, the women from the girls, the cats from the kittens, the wolves from the sheep, the (*that's enough things to sort out -Ed*) with *Raid.*



SQUAMBLE

Once more, AMIGA POWER takes you back in time to the days when men were men, women were women, and arcade games were called things like '*Gorf*' and '*Plieades*'. One of them was also called '*Scramble*', and we're moderately chuffed to bring you this action-packed (and rather pleasingly red-coloured) tribute to it.

DISK RETURNS

Disk Copy Labs plc, Unit A, West March, London Road, Daventry NN4 4SA. Give them a few days to recover from the shock of one of their disks not working properly (well, allow up to 28 before you start hassling them), and they'll despatch a new one to you with all due swiftness.

disk TEN

AMIGA POWER PRESENTS

MR WOBBLY LEG VERSUS THE INVADERS FROM SPACE

EARLY LEARNING

If you're new to all this 'game-loading' malarkey and you're not quite sure how to go about it, just follow this easy guide to carefree gaming the AMIGA POWER way.

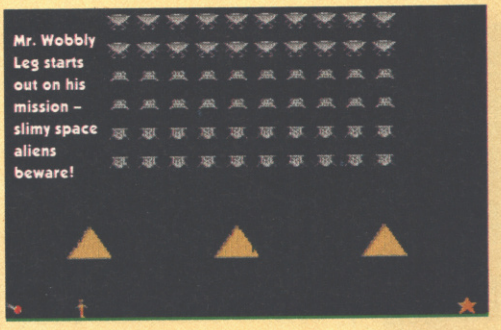
1. First, ensure your Amiga is switched off, with a joystick plugged into Joystick Port Two and a mouse in Joystick Port One.
2. Insert your top-quality AMIGA POWER coverdisk into the internal disk drive and switch the power on.
3. Carefully peruse the bijou menu-ette which should appear on your screen after a few seconds.
4. Select which piece of top-quality alien-blasting action takes your fancy and press the appropriate function key.
5. Wait around for a few seconds (don't worry if the menu screen appears again) and then play your game, which should hopefully have loaded. (Incidentally, if you're trying to load *Raid* and the Amiga prints a 'Couldn't read file' error message or something like that, ignore it. It's lying. Amigas are like that)
6. Once your game has loaded, don't get cocky. Leave the disk in the disk drive at all times.

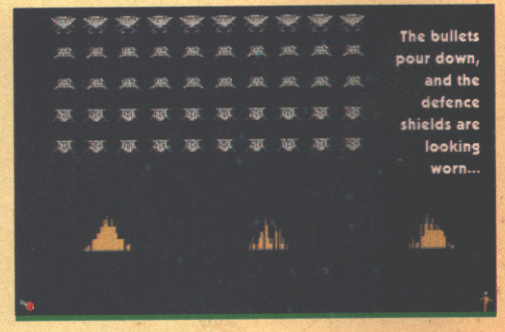
THE HARD WAY

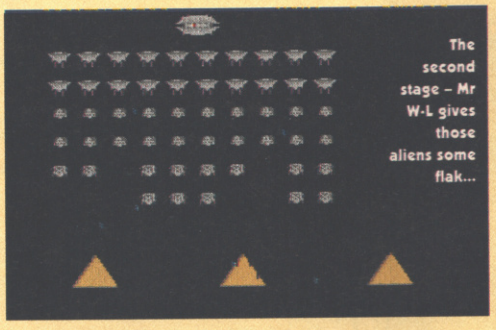
If the disk fails to work correctly in some way or another, there are several things you can do.

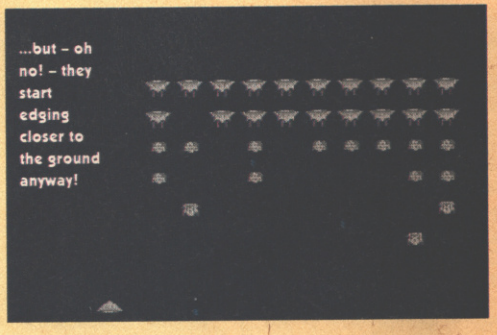
1. Firstly, try starting the whole process over again from the beginning, making sure that you don't have any peripherals (extra disk drives etc) plugged into your machine. Amigas are notoriously picky about that kind of thing.
2. If that doesn't help, you've probably got a corrupt disk. It's just conceivable that you could repair it using the Disk Doctor program which should have come with your machine (instructions should be in your user manual).
3. If that doesn't work either, then help is still at hand. Simply package the disk up securely in a jiffy bag or somesuch and send it off NOT TO US, PLEASE, FOR GOODNESS SAKE, but to: ***AMIGA POWER Disk 10 Returns, Disk Copy Labs plc, Unit A, West March, London Road, Daventry, NN4 4SA.***

Give them a few days to recover from the shock of one of the disks not working properly (well, allow up to 28 before you start hassling them), and they'll despatch a new one to you with all due swiftness.





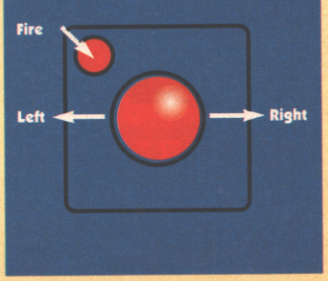




Authors: Michael C Diskett

Oh no, not again. The Invaders are back, they're meaner than ever, and this time it's even worse than usual. Why? Well, you know how in *Invader* game scenarios, there's usually only one man dumb enough not to pile straight onto the nearest spaceship and get the hell out of there, instead hanging about and facing the insurmountable odds by himself? And you know how it always seems to be you who gets the job? Well, in *Mr Wobbly Leg* it's exactly the same.

CONTROLS



THE GAME IN GENERAL

However, in best British red tape tradition, this time around you've got to go through an awful lot of hassle before you're allowed anywhere near a defensive gun battery. The Space Defence Corps (motto: Who Cares Who Wins?) won't let just anyone take up arms against the slimy alien menace. Oh no. To get yourself horribly mutilated (and eventually killed, as is the inevitable conclusion to the *Space Invaders* story) defending the Earth in *Mr Wobbly Leg*, you first have to rise through the ranks by collecting general's stars before anyone will trust you with even the weediest of weapons. So there you are, frantically rushing back and forth across the screen collecting stars while the aliens rain plutonium death on your head. Get five, and you'll be deemed worthy of taking the space creeps on for real, but only with a useless peashooter of a gun. To power up your weaponry you have to collect further stars, each one of which will endow you with a useful addition to your arsenal.

GETTING YOUR OWN BACK

When you lose a life on the star-collecting screen – having collected at least five stars in a row previously – you move onto the shoot-'em-up section of the game. This is your traditional *Space Invaders* effort, where the invaders shoot at you, while continuously marching left and right across the screen, dropping down lower and lower every time one of them hits an edge. (It's far better than most commercial efforts you've seen though, including the recent big name one...).

If any of the invaders reaches the bottom, the Earth gets invaded, it's the end of civilisation as we know it, and you've lost the game. It's up to you to stop them... ●

RAID

Author: Andrew Fereday

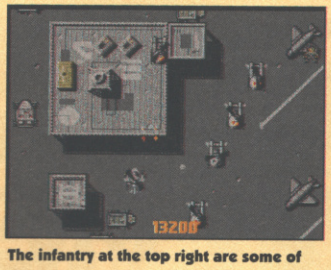
Despite the fact that it doesn't come in third order on the disk, this is the game you'll get to last. The reason? It's just so much harder than any of the others! (Or, looking at it another way, you've had it too easy so far. All these ridiculously simple shoot-'em-ups we've been chucking at you are just getting beyond the pale. Thousands upon thousands of readers have written to us and jammed the phone lines demanding that we give you something to really get your teeth into, so here it is).

What it actually is is yet another top-quality blasting game written with top-quality blasting-game utility *Shoot-'Em-Up Construction Kit*. *Raid* is a groovy zapper heavily, er, 'inspired' by Storm's classic *SWIV*. If you don't know what that means, well, it's not going to take a lot of explaining. Basically, you control a little helicopter with an attitude problem, in that he wants to kill everyone. Luckily (from a Zen point of view, anyway), everyone wants to kill him too. So, to keep everyone happy, grab a joystick and get killing.

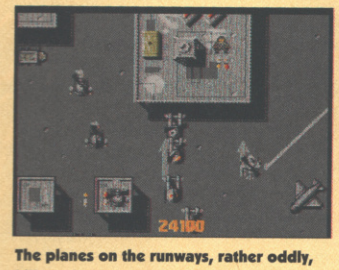
THINGS TO REMEMBER

(Remember? Don't you need a brain to remember things? And if you've got a brain, why aren't you using it instead of playing a drooling psycho nutter's game like this?) Anyway, there are a couple of things which it would be wise to keep in mind while you play *Raid*.

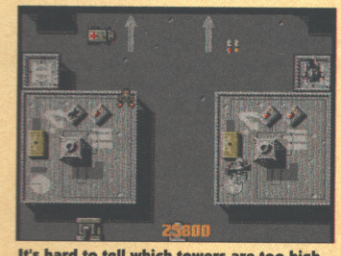
The most important one is that the baddies aren't the usual highly-strung soft boys you tend to meet in this kind of game – most of the opposition you'll meet in *Raid* can soak up at least a couple of hits before dying. The second thing is, er... Okay, so we lied. There's really only one thing you need to remember, and that's that everything on screen hates you and deserves to die. Can you cope with that? Good. The best we can manage on the game is almost reaching the end of the third level, so if you can get further than that, you have our full permission to feel very pleased with yourself indeed. ●



The infantry at the top right are some of the worst enemies you'll meet.

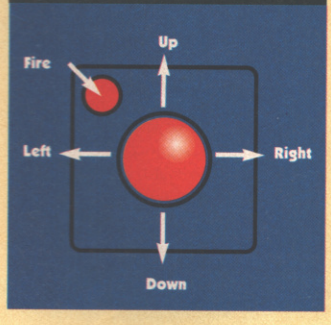


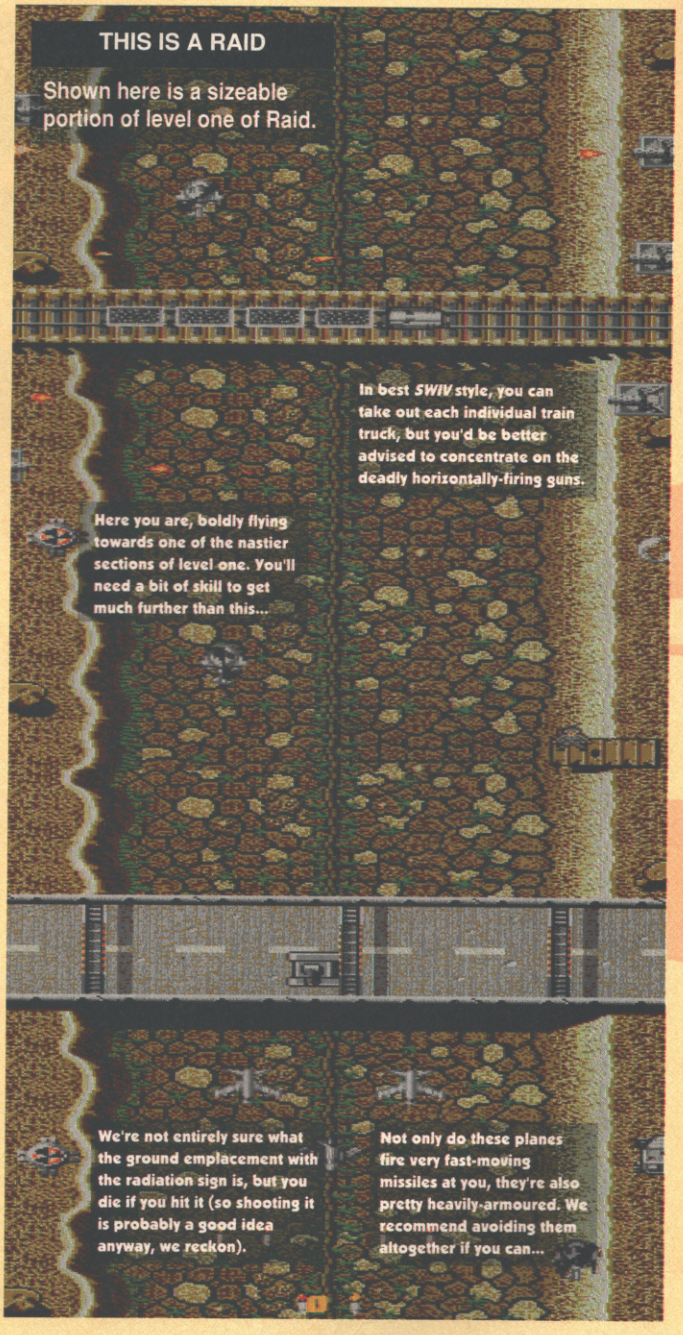
The planes on the runways, rather oddly, kill you if you crash into them. Bummer.

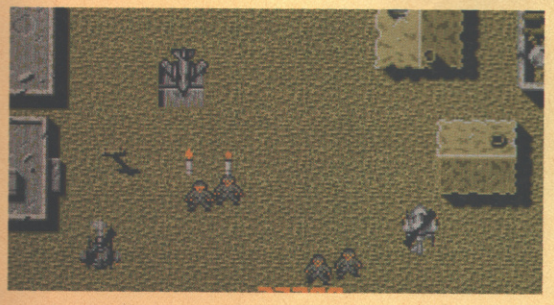


It's hard to tell which towers are too high to fly over, so just shoot all of them.

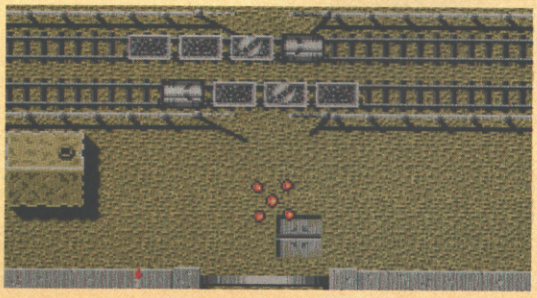
CONTROLS







Look, there. just to prove that at least one of us can actually get to level three, here's the evidence. Hmm. Bit on the, er, yellow side...



"...you join us in the middle of a rather violent explosion, probably a result of our helicopter being blown from the sky by that gun turret below."

SQUAMBLE

Authors: John T Kennedy

So, feeling a bit fragile after Christmas and New Year, are we? Not quite operating at full alien-zapping efficiency? Or just new to all this Amiga and computer gaming lark? What you need is an arcade game to break you in gently, one that's plenty of fun to play but not so terrifyingly hard and vicious that it'll reduce you to a nervous, dispirited wreck ready to give up before you've really got started. Which brings us neatly round to an excellent slice of PD action with the bizarre title of *Squamble*.

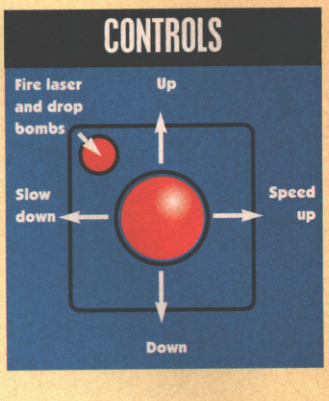
Squamble is a neat little shoot-'em-up based on the age-old coin-op *Scramble*. The aim of the game is beautifully simple, and unfolds thus: You pilot a jet fighter across a continually-scrolling landscape, at the end of which lies an enemy base. Between you and it are eight levels of defence, containing all kinds of alien craft intent on putting a halt to your progress. You'll find rockets, ground-based guns, spaceships, even indestructible meteorite attacks (!) to survive before you even get a chance to destroy the base.

UP A BIT, LEFT A BIT...

To help you, you're armed with lasers and bombs, both of which are activated by pressing the fire button on your joystick. Lasers shoot out in a straight line in front of your jet, while bombs drop at an angle of about 30 degrees (relative to the ground), and both destroy anything they hit, with the exception of the meteorites in the fourth stage.

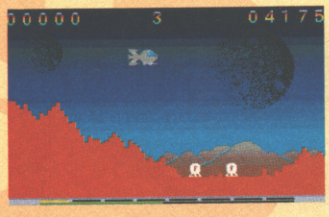
Most targets simply yield points, but there's one exception – fuel tanks (indicated by the letter 'F') which give you extra fuel when hit (don't ask us how), which is vital because your ship continuously uses the stuff up like a 4.2 litre Jaguar (we know a joke about one of those, but that's another story) going at 150mph, and if it runs out the jet will plummet helplessly to the ground.

When you finally manage to blow up the enemy base, the game starts over again from the first stage, except this time everything's a good deal harder. If you think *Squamble*'s too easy, just you try taking out that base three times in a row, then see how clever you feel...

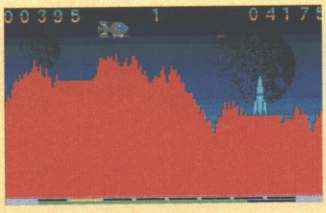


SONS OF THE STAGE(S)

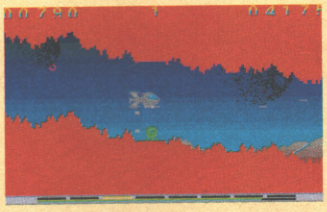
The eight levels of *Squamble* more or less correspond to the five levels of the coin-op, but tweaked around with a bit. Use the handy at-a-glance guide below to learn what you're in for as you slaughter your way to the enemy hideout. ●



STAGE ONE – a short easy getting-to-know-you kind of effort – little hills, hardly any baddies at all.

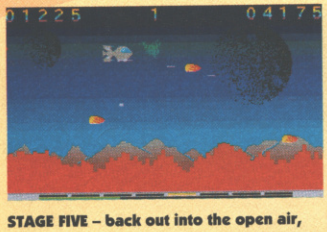


STAGE TWO – much like stage one, but with a slightly more challenging landscape and increased enemy count.

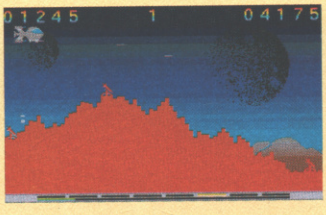


STAGE THREE – a trickier tunnel section which brings a roof into play for the first time. Narrow manoeuvring space, but not many aliens to worry about.

STAGE FOUR – the tunnel widens, but the extra space is taken up by flitting enemy spaceships. They don't shoot at you, but they're deadly to touch.

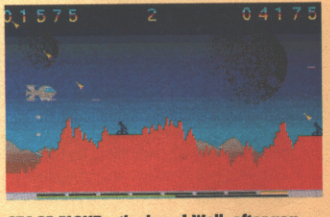


STAGE FIVE – back out into the open air, but don't relax – you can shoot and bomb those meteorites all you want, it won't harm them. Be careful not to run out of fuel during this section.



STAGE SIX – this is similar to stages one and two, except the enemy installations are lots meaner, and they're camouflaged into the bargain.

STAGE SEVEN – a test of your joystick agility – nothing shoots at you in this stage, but your time will be taken up trying not to crash head-first into the walls of the cavern maze.



STAGE EIGHT – the base! Well, after you get past just a few little gun emplacements and so on, anyway. You'll need some precision bombing, too...

TELL US YOUR DREAMS

Since we're in a thoughtful kind of mood this month where coverdisk affairs are concerned, we want your opinions on what kind of things you'd like to see appearing in the coming months. One thing we're considering is putting a pokes section on, with lots of short hacks enabling you to cheat at games without all that tedious mucking around with cheat modes and secret passwords and so on. Good idea, or not? (Remember, they'll only be of interest to those of you who actually have the game in question).

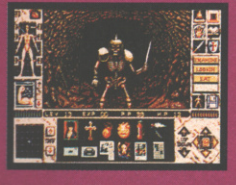
If you'd like to see something along those lines, or if you think you could actually come up with the necessary hacks, why not drop us a line? Write and tell us, too, if you'd like to see us abandon PD stuff in favour of more game demos, or abandon game demos to make room for more complete PD games. Or maybe you'd like to see more reader PD games like *Puggles* and *Mr Wobbly Leg*? Maybe you'd like lots of digitised pictures of unusual South American fish, accompanied by sampled bagpipe music? Or maybe you've got some completely brilliant idea of your own that no-one's ever thought of before which will revolutionise the whole concept of coverdiskery altogether?

Well, we can't read your minds (except on Tuesdays), so if you're not happy with the state of the disk at the moment, or if you like it just the way it is and want it to stay that way, jot us a quick note and send it to *'I Am Superman And I Know What's Happening', AMIGA POWER, 29 Monmouth Street, Bath, Avon, BA1 2BW.* Thank you.

Elvira II: The Jaws of Cerberus

"THE EARTH OPENED. ONE BY ONE THE MOST HIDEOUS MONSTERS OF GOTHIC HORROR CRAWLED THROUGH THE PORTAL. THE NIGHTMARE HAD BEGUN."

PRESENTING ELVIRA II: THE JAWS OF CERBERUS,™ A FANTASY QUEST OF EPIC PROPORTIONS.



AN EVIL FORCE HAS PENETRATED OUR UNIVERSE AND ABDUCTED ELVIRA HERSELF. YOUR TASK? FIND AND RESCUE ELVIRA INSIDE THREE CAVERNOUS MOVIE SETS—A GRAVEYARD, HAUNTED HOUSE AND CATACOMBS—THEN FIGHT A FINAL CATACLYSMIC BATTLE WITH A NETHERWORLD ENTITY OF AWESOME FURY. ♦ EXPLORE THREE HUGE AND HORRIFYING WORLDS WITH NEARLY 4000 LOCATIONS—FIVE TIMES LARGER THAN THE ORIGINAL ELVIRA ♦ OVER 120 HOURS OF SUSPENSE-INTENSE GAMEPLAY ♦ MORE THAN 700 DEADLY WEAPONS, SCROLLS AND OTHER TOOLS OF THE TRADE ♦ FULLY ANIMATED ENCOUNTERS WITH HUNDREDS OF FORMIDABLE NEW OPPONENTS ♦ NEW ON-SCREEN SPELL BOOK GENERATOR ♦ NEW ON-SCREEN HIT-POINT ALLOCATION SYSTEM ♦ NEW ON-SCREEN 360-DEGREE ENEMY DETECTOR & TRACKER ♦ THE VGA GRAPHICS? STUNNING. THE SOUNDTRACK? HAUNTING. AND 100% "POINT & CLICK" CONTROL MAKES IT SO EASY TO PLAY IT'S FRIGHTENING. THE BOTTOM LINE? ELVIRA II IS THE FANTASY BLOCKBUSTER OF THE YEAR. TO ORDER, VISIT YOUR FAVORITE RETAILER OR CALL (081) 877-0880.

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TRUE STORIES

REASONS TO BE CHEERLESS (PART ONE)

Forget *Champions Of The Raj, Turtles* et al. Mirrorsoft have actually been one of the most innovative of the big publishers over the past few years, with a steady stream of ground-breaking products. Here, then, are some of the things we have Mirrorsoft (and its associate labels) to be thankful for...

Speedball II, Dungeon Master, Mega lo Mania, Xenon II, Falcon, Interphase, Cadaver, First Samurai, Rocket Ranger, Blade Warrior...

MIRRORSOFT GO BUST!

BUT THEY WON'T BE AWAY FOR LONG!

As of the beginning of this year Mirrorsoft, one of the country's biggest software publishers, no longer existed. Staff apparently received the news on New Year's Eve, though the possibility of the company going out of business had obviously been much discussed for some time before. A number of employees are currently considering jobs elsewhere in the software industry.

So what happened? Well, quite simply, the company – which was reputedly operating at a profit throughout 1991 – has been a victim of the turmoil within Robert Maxwell's Mirror Group since his death at the tail end of last year. In other words, the collapse wasn't really down to any fault within Mirrorsoft itself, but due to powers outside their control. Not unlike the situation with the equally successful Firebird/Rainbird outfit three years ago, a large software publisher has fallen victim to internal wrangles within its parent company.

So what happens now? Many industry pundits were hoping a last minute management buyout, spearheaded by Mirrorsoft Managing Director Peter Bilotta and Sales & Marketing Director Sean Brennan and backed by outside money, would rescue the company at the last minute, but this failed to come off. That being the case, the future remains unclear – as far as the gameplayer is concerned, the most immediate effect is that many much-looked-for games will now no longer appear, or appear late and from different publishers. Indeed, while most of the company's much-touted Christmas products (including *Cisco Heat* and Vivid Image's *First Samurai*) made it to the shops before the company went under, even some of these appear to have gone missing – we've yet to meet anyone who's seen the Amiga version of *Turtles: The Arcade Game* on sale anywhere, for instance.

Similarly, many forthcoming products, including *Lure Of The Temptress*, Graftgold's *Fire & Ice* and Sensible's *Mega lo Mania II*, are currently in the process of finding new homes. Perhaps more complicated will be placing Mirrorsoft's licenced games – Probe's 3D conversion of *Alien III* should certainly see the light of day in some form or other, for instance, but the legal route it has to go through to get there could be long and tortuous. There's little else to say really. What a sad start to 1992.

STOP PRESS:

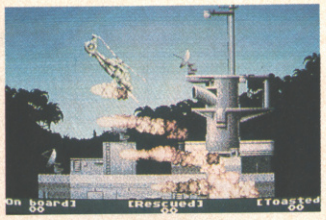
A Mirrorsoft rescue could be on the cards after all! Industry rumour as it that Acclaim, the US based Nintendo developers, are buying the comapny. What they get exactly is anybody's guess – many of the big name original products having already gone to other publishers – but apparently a number of top Mirrorsoft staff will be working with this new venture.

SOME OF THE GAMES YOU MAY NEVER SEE:

These games, due to be published over the next few months by Mirrorsoft, are all close to completion, and now have an uncertain future following the collapse of their publisher. Who'll give them a good home..?

APOCALYPSE

(Strangeways Software)



This highly regarded helicopter shoot-'em-up – in many ways a 1990s upgrading of the classic *Choplifter* – was due for a New Year release. Rumour has it that this'll now be going out through Virgin, but we'll see...

DROP SOLDIER

(Ross Goodly)

Developed by the programmer of the much-acclaimed *Gravity*, this futuristic 3D strategy/role player looks sure to find a good home. But where..?

FIRE AN ICE

(Graftgold)

A bright-and-bouncy arcade romp from *Rainbow Islands*-converters Graftgold, *Fire And Ice* features a large cute wolf, lots of little puppies, and lots (and lots) of monsters. (See page 74 for more details).

DUSTER

(Realtime/Rowan)

Half business sim, half 3D action, this unusual (and long awaited!) game, set on a deep-space agricultural colony and featuring futuristic pest controllers, looks further from release than ever...

TUNNELS OF DOOM

Yet another future-sport simulation, this one set in a series of sub-lunar tunnels, was due for a release early in 1992. And now..?

TV SPORTS: BASEBALL

(Cinemaware)

It's not just this trio of new games, it's the whole Cinemaware line that's at risk now, Mirrorsoft being a major financial player in that firm's continued existence.

TV SPORTS: BOXING

(Cinemaware)

...that means both *TV Sports* games, due this winter, are now at risk.

ROLLERBABES

(Cinemaware)

Sharing some characteristics with *TV Sports*, this futuristic roller derby game has been eagerly awaited by Cinemaware fans (not least our own Gary Penn) for about two years now. And just as we thought it was finally about to come out... it, erm, didn't.

ALIEN III

(Probe)

Due for release in Feb, to tie in with the launch of the film, *Alien III* is an all-action blaster featuring real movie stills.

SUZERAIN

(Foursfield)

Programmed by Foursfield, creators of Image Works' successful *Brat*, *Suzerain* is an arcade adventure featuring eight-way scrolling and a reputeably Dali-esque feel. Current fate unknown.

LURE OF THE TEMPTRESS

A graphic adventure in the Lucasfilm style – apparently Britain's answer to *The Secret Of Monkey Island* – but possibly no longer.

RIDERS OF ROHAN

(PSS)

One of Britain's oldest labels, strategy specialists PSS had a number of products scheduled for this winter. This one was a 3D wargame based on the works of JRR Tolkien. Sounded good, but what happens to PSS titles now is a mystery...

LEGEND

(PSS/Tag)

...which is a particular shame when you look at *Legend*. This 3D isometric *Bloodwych* sequel looked set for *Hero Quest*-style crossover success.

REACH FOR THE SKIES

(PSS)

Despite the Douglas Bader title, the tin-legged Spitfire pilot doesn't actually seem to appear at all in this highly technical Battle Of Britain sim. (And at this rate nobody else will either...)

RED PHOENIX

(PSS)

Based on Larry Bond's best-selling Korean War novel, this flight and submarine sim – developed by *Flight of The Intruder* people Rowan Software – was intended for a winter release. And now...

THE 'DONGLE'
OCEAN'S NEW PROTECTION SYSTEM AN INITIAL SUCCESS

Ocean's Gary Bracey – the man most keen to push the dongle through

The fight against software piracy has been stepped up a degree or two – as buyer's of Ocean's *RoboCop 3* will be more than aware. The UK software giant has experimented with an Electronic Key (or 'dongle') included with the cyborg policeman's latest Amiga adventure – without this small metal-and-plastic wedge inserted in your number two port at the rear, the game simply won't run. If the experiment proves to be a success similar dongles will be included in future Ocean products, particularly their top-end range. We spoke to Ocean to find out more.

Has this experiment proved a success?

Up until this point in time we have to say yes. We've been closely monitoring the performance of *RoboCop 3* and the level of piracy we've come across has been far less than we could have otherwise expected of a game with this one's profile. In terms of this product, then, it's obviously been a financial success.

How does it work? Are the dongles completely impossible to get past?

No, but it's a far more complicated process than with any other sort of game. People have actually cracked *RoboCop 3* now according to the bulletin boards, but they've used some very high technology kit that most pirates wouldn't have access to. What happens is that about 50 times during your playing of the game the computer asks if the dongle is in place, and if it doesn't get the message back that it is and it can carry on, the game crashes. What the hackers have done is not find the 50 places this happens, but modify another bit of the program so the computer gets the message 'no, the dongle's not in place, but carry on anyway.'

It's a loop hole, basically, but now we realise it's there we can change things so they can't get around it that easily.

What other products do you intend to include dongles in?

It hasn't been decided yet. There's still more research to be done on how much of a success this one's been yet. Obviously it costs us a fair amount of money to include one in each box and takes a fair amount off our bottom line, so decisions will probably be made on a product by product basis on what sort of protection system seems suitable for each one.

Who developed it for you?

A company called Hollis Research. Gary Bracey, the Software Director here at Ocean, was especially keen on it – he had most to do with development and pushing it through. Gary's basic pholosphy was, 'well, it's an experiment, but if there's a chance it might help stop piracy we've got to at least try it.'

Are other software houses likely to follow suit?

Other people are obviously watching it very closely, but no, at the moment it's just an Ocean thing.

How've you been dealing with returns?

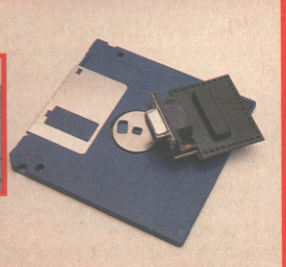
This is obviously one of the trickiest areas of the whole thing. We've put stickers on the front of the boxes about the dongles, and we've made sure the distributers are making all the shops well aware of what we're doing – we're trying to avoid a situation where someone comes to us with their copy of *RoboCop 3* and say 'look, there was no dongle in my box.' And, in actual fact, that hasn't happened yet.

Certainly with postal returns we're insisting we see your old dongle before we give you a new one – the most important thing is we don't give out any more dongles than there are official disks for them. For most people who might pirate the software, that piratecopy is useless unless they actually have one of these little bits of hardware, which is, of course, the whole point of the operation.

DESIGN A DONGLE!
WIN ONE OF FIVE COPIES OF ROBOCOP 3!

COMPETITION

If the dongle's a success and Ocean start including them with other products they're going to have to change the design each time so you don't get your *Robo* dongle mixed up with your *Hook* one (or whatever). That's why we're asking for your ideas – just draw us your design for the plastic casing for your new dongle (it has to be no bigger than a match box and pluggable into the back of an Amiga) and you could win a copy of *RoboCop 3* (complete with a real dongle of your very own!). Send it to Design A Dongle! Compo at the normal AP address, and get it in by February 29th.



The dongle – black, plastic & the size of a matchbox. Could you do better?

CRIB SHEETS

ELECTRONIC ARTS

ELECTRONIC ARTS

Contact: Electronic Arts Limited, Langley Business Centre, Station Road, Langley, Berkshire. SL3 8YN. Tel. 0753 549442
History: The company was formed in January 1982 in the United States as a development and publishing house by Trip Hawkins, an ex-director of Apple. His intention was to bring home computer entertainment to the general public in a style to rival the Hollywood movie industry – in the words of their UK PR Manager, Simon Jeffery, as "something that could be genuinely classed as interactive entertainment."

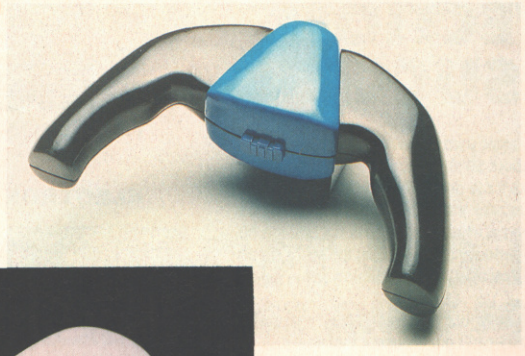
The first game, *Pinball Construction Set*, was not published until May 1983, but things soon grew. In 1987 the highly successful European operation was established in the UK, the current boss being an American, Mark Lewis.
People: Electronic Arts employ about 50 full time staff in the UK and 300 worldwide. In the UK, 15 people are directly involved in software development, though most of the actual programming is done by outside teams.
Greatest Success: This, according to Simon Jeffery, "has to be either *Populous* and *Deluxe Paint IV*, but we're expecting great things from *Populous 2* and *Birds of Prey* too."
Greatest Failure:
"I'm going to have to think hard about that – I don't think anything has really flopped on us. There are no skeletons in our cupboards – nothing we're ashamed of."
Typical Electronic Arts game: For Simon Jeffery, "*Populous* sums us up because it's interactive, creative, high quality and above all entertaining."
How do they see themselves: "I think really our speciality is diversity."
How do other people see them: "Initially there was perhaps an image of big brash Americanism about us, but now I'd say we're certainly one of the most widely respected publishers in the industry."
Product development: Electronic Arts confess that they have no set way of doing things. Every project is assigned a producer, who is responsible for co-ordinating all aspects of game production from the initial conception to completion, a lot of his time spent managing the individual programming teams – not unlike the role of producer in the movie industry, in fact.

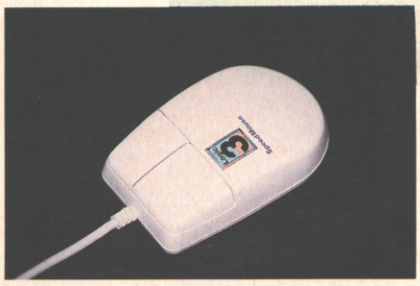
EA draw a number of quite close parallels: "In a few years you'll see the movie industry looking very hard at the software industry. At the moment its like two lines converging, with our industry rapidly developing as the hardware platforms afford more and more realistic audiovisuals," offers Jeffery.
Final Word: "Electronic Arts is receiving a lot of publicity about our Sega Mega Drive games at the moment, but we'd like to reassure Amiga owners that we'll still be heavily supporting the Amiga for a long time into the future."

Black Crypt **– EA's impressive looking entry into the ever-growing RPG arena.**

SICK OF STICKS?

The bizarre new Stealth game controller – a giant plastic curvy thing you hold in two hands – meets a boring old Logic 3 mouse. (Now all you've got to do is guess which is which).





We've got one of these odd-looking blue things in the office and we've broken it, so evaluation's a little bit tricky. However, if you're into bizarro joysticks and other game's controllers, the swoopy looking Stealth from new peripherals manufacturer Ktron could be the thing for you. Designed by Wyn Holloway of Konix Speed King fame, it's got no actual stick as such, but responds to the pivoting of either of the two horn-like handles. You look a bit of a jerk playing with it – it looks like you're trying to pull apart a giant wishbone – but with a few refinements to the mechansism now in place Ktron feel they've got a world beating product on their hands. And it'll only set you back a measly £14.99 too (though we do advise you try before you buy).

Perhaps a bit more sensible (and only three quid more expensive at £17.99) is this swichable mouse from Logic 3, makers of the Sting Ray and Manta Ray joysticks. Quite what it's got over other mice is unclear, but it might make a worthy alternative to various Contriver, Golden Image and Naksha products... Worth considering anyway.

Oh dear...

We play a lot of games/ they're mostly all right,
But now and then there's one/ that really is(*Snip !-Ed*)

LAST NINJA 2 (System 3/Activision)

Well, you got a pretty good idea of the level of quality we're operating at here from the title, didn't you? '*Last Ninja 2*' indeed. What next, *No, Really, This Is Definitely The Final Fight*, or *More Or Less The Ultimate Ride, Except For The Next One, Maybe* perhaps? The scariest thing about *Last Ninja 2*, though, is the fact that things actually went downhill from here...

"Coming Soon! From the People Who Brought You *The Last Ninja*! '*Last Ninja 2 – No, We Mean It This Time (Or Do We?)*'! GASP! at the revolutionary control system, whereby no joystick move produces the same response on two screens in a row! MARVEL at the fabulous 'X-Ray-O-Vision (tm)' which enables you to see the inner workings of the program in action as it draws each location brick-by-brick in front of your very eyes! SCREAM IN HORROR as your ninja moonwalks across screen after screen, standing on air and falling through solid floors without regard for the laws of physics! FAINT IN DISBELIEF as your rock-hard ninja attempts to defeat a deadly enemy by crouching on the ground and nibbling at his ankles! CRY A RIVER OF TEARS when you hear that they're going to do it all again in a couple of years time!"

Please, please, please, let number three *really* be the last one...

***Last Ninja 2* – the shock is that lots of people seem to actually *like* it (in theory)**

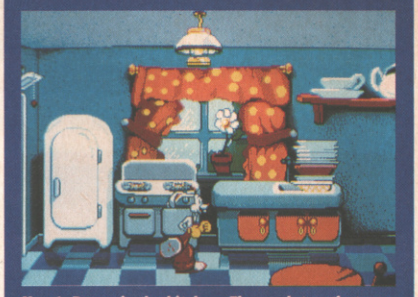
CRYING SHAME (1)

There'll now be no new *Solar Jetman* game from Storm, despite the fact that it was commissioned and development taken to a fairly advanced stage – it's 'just too much like an 8-bit game' apparently. A shame – perhaps some enterprising budget house could pick up the licence and almost-finshed code themselves..?

WHAT, YET MORE RPG?

As if the big name newies covered in last month's FRP special weren't enough, there's still the general run of the things to cope with, and nobody's more committed to the idea of flooding the market with role playing games of all shapes and sizes than SSI. *Treasures Of The Savage Frontier* is the newest of their official Advanced Dungeons & Dragons series, and the sequel to their still-yet-to-come-out-on-the-Amiga *Gateway To The Savage Frontier*. At £32.99 for this three disk beginner/intermediate level game, it's hardly cheap, but then you do get a suggested 40-100 hours from the thing. The Amiga version isn't actually due until September. In the meantime, SSI get a lot closer to present day reality with *Conflict: Korea*, a strategy game based on the early 50s conflict in Southern Asia. This one costs even more (£34.99) but then you *do* get an extra scenario which assumes the conflict is still going, with limited modern-day US Forces still fighting the war. Look for an Amiga release by May of this year.

P-P-P-PLEEEASE!



Here's Roger in the kitchen. Those plates, that rug, the cooker, the fridge – so much could go wrong...

At last! It's long overdue but a second Roger Rabbit game is due to be with us in February or March, this time based not on the original film, but on one of those Maroon Cartoons that you occasionally see at the cinemas before the main 'feature presentation.' *Hare Raising Havoc*, as it's called, will be one meg only and go through the Paris based Disney Software, and is built up of seven different puzzle predicaments, each one set against a time limit.

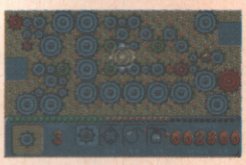
What's happened is that, once again, Roger has been left holding the baby – Baby Herman, in fact – but, oh no, Roger's managed to lose him, get himself locked in the living room, and Mommy will be back soon from her shopping trip! It's a race against time as our Rog dashes from disaster to disaster in an attempt to get everything back to rights (and hopefully earn lovely Jessica Rabbit's devotion in the process). A classy sounding project, majoring on excellent animation and a library of cartoon sound effects (including the voices of the actual film actors), which should appeal to just about everyone.

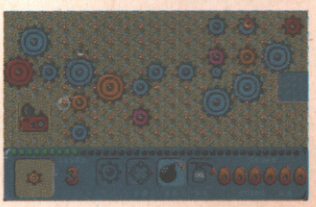
WHAT BIG HANDS YOU'VE GOT!

You remember who Idea are, don't you? They're the crazy Italian software house who brought us the controversial *Lupo Alberto* (amongst others). Now, after a number of very European (ie weirdly French-style) platform and driving games, they've got around to that other staple of unusual foreign software houses – the puzzle game, this one entitled *Clik Clak*. Your task – should you wish to undertake it – is to build clocks on the front of some of the world's most famous buildings, the puzzle being that you've got to link all the gears 'round the back of the building so that each clock actually works. You've also got to struggle against 'time, rust, and plenty of spiteful poffins!!'

We can't wait! (We're going to have to though – but we should have a finished one for review next ish).

11 o'clock, tick tock. Everything's in place for a successfully constructed clock, in Idea's *Clik Clak*.



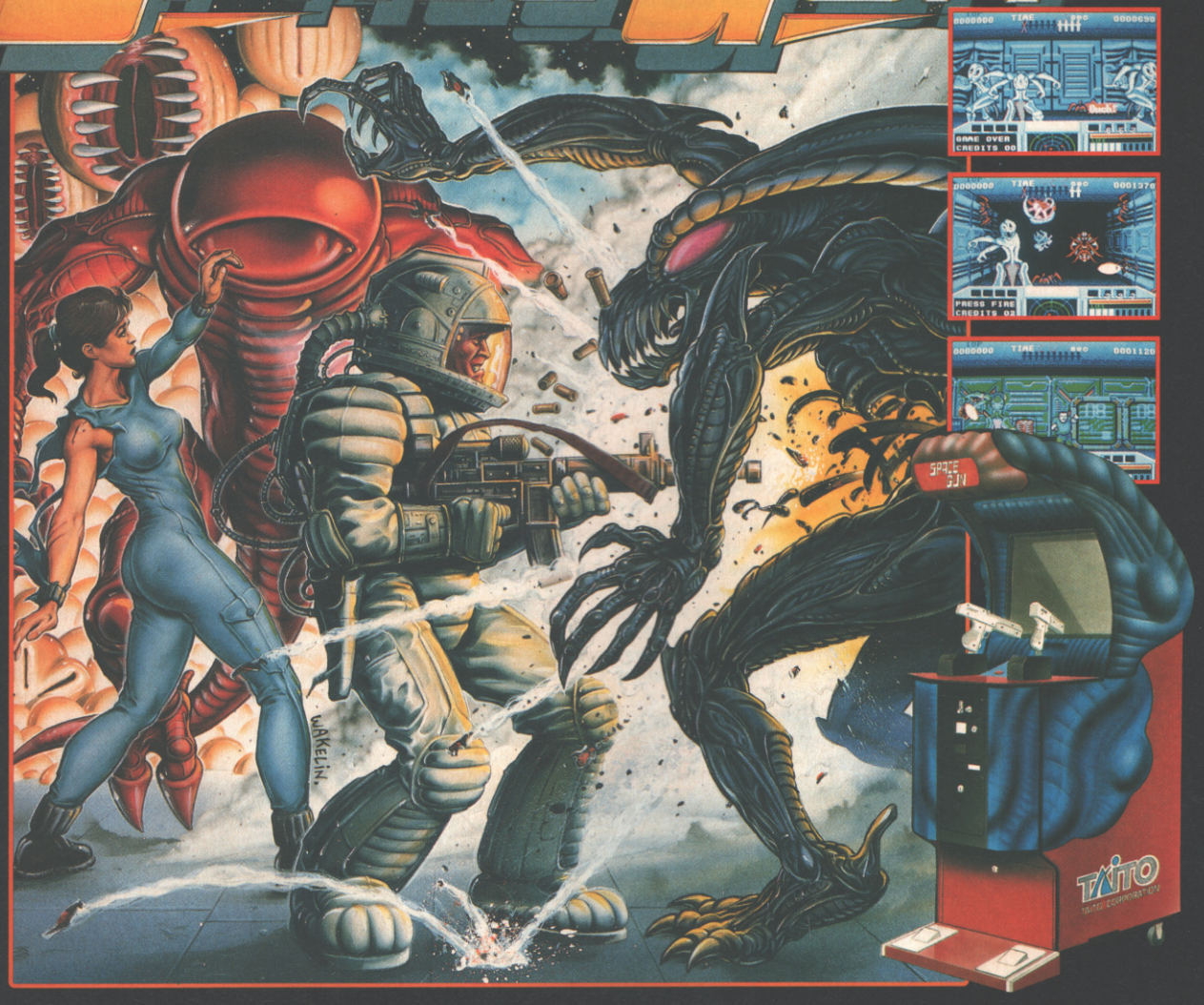


Time to work out where our cog design has gone wrong. (Everywhere by the look of things).

NO CD-ROM? Ask your newsagent! version also available

SPACE GUN

TAITO



YOU HAVE BEEN ORDERED TO RESCUE THE HOSTAGES IMMEDIATELY!!

The year is 2039 A.D. Man takes deep space exploration to a new level of sophistication. However, at a distant space colony, a sudden escalation of unexplained disappearances and deaths cause the Federal Government of the Earth to launch a thorough investigation. Their best team of commandos are consigned to the far reaches of the galaxy. Enroute, they intercept a distress signal emitting from an Earth-bound cargo ship. The crew has been taken hostage by an unknown life form and are in great danger if not rescued immediately. The alien forms must be destroyed before they reach their final conquest... **The Earth!!**

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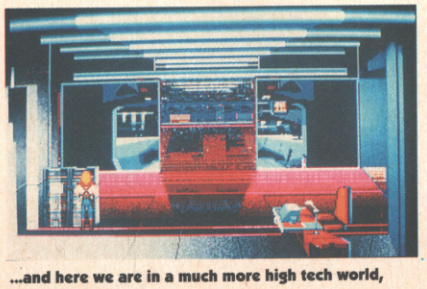
MISSION? ERM...

Eternam takes place on a series of islands which correspond to time zones. Here's ancient Egypta...

Remember *Drakkhen*? It was a rather giant-sized – and graphically stunning – adventure thing from Infogrames which came out a couple of years ago or so to much critical acclaim (and a fair amount of punter confusion). Now, at last, the sequel *Eternam* is here, sending you (as an agent of the Universal Security Agency) on a mission to... well, it's not quite clear what. Indeed, though you're sent to an archipelago of very varied islands – some, like Egypta, firmly lodged in the past, others (Tekchnika, say) packed with the most advanced technology – where you must solve a number of puzzles, your overall mission only becomes clear as you explore the game. (Imagine the plot structure of your average Tom Baker Doctor Who story to get some idea of how the whole thing works).

In its time, *Drakkhen* was an exceptionally impressive game, ambitious and – yes – rather ground-breaking in a number of ways. Whether *Eternam* can keep ahead of the pack in the same way remains to be seen – after all, this sort of graphic adventure has come an awful long way in the last couple of years, not least in the hands of Infogrames' neighbours Delphine – but we'll be intrigued to see it. With such features as 'mobile real time 3D with height differences', 'animations of cartoon quality', 'thousands of unknown monsters', 'meetings with legendary characters', and a 'fantastic and extremely humourous scenario' you'd be a fool to ignore it really. Look for a review soon.

...while in this more medieval European scene we seem to be talking to some sort of writer...



...and here we are in a much more high tech world, quite possibly the island of Tekchnika.

NEW INDY GAME!

Ahem, it's *Indy Heat* actually, the new racing game. The sequel to coin-op creator Leland's *Super Off Road Racer*, it presents the action from a similar slightly-angled-*Super-Sprint* type of perspective, though this time it's American roundy roundy racing that's being 'simulated.' Up to three players and tactical use of pitstops made the arcade version tons of fun. Let's hope the Amiga release (£25.99, end of Feb) lives up to it...

CRYING SHAME (2)

Sorry, but you can forget about seeing an Amiga version of *Ant Attack* by Sandy White, as has been reported elsewhere. This one hasn't been cancelled, it just never existed in the first place – rumours that Sandy was going to leave his successful poster printing business and enter the software arena again were greatly exaggerated.

10 MEANING-FREE GAME TITLES

It's hard to believe just how ridiculous the titles of many Amiga games actually are. Here, to prove the point, are a few of our 'favourites', ten game-names that seem to be completely free of meaning whatsoever!

Deuteros
Borobodur
Armour-Geddon
Brataccus
Booly
Volfied
Carcharodon
Pyramax
Yolanda
Quantox

(*That's enough crap game titles -Ed*)

Don't quote us...

Oh no! It's back – the column where we don't do any real reesearch, we just speculate outrageously on things we'd like to see in the future (and the odd thing we'd absolutely hate to see, but have the horrible feeling may arrive with a dreadful inevitability anyway). Things like these...

• Telly watchers can't fail to have noticed the return of an all-new series of children's TV classic The Magic Roundabout on Channel Four, complete with scripts and voices by top comic actor Nigel Planer. Those with long memories will remember CRL (now On-Line) had a game based on the show come out on the Spectrum absolutely ages ago, so a 16-bit revival would seem to echo its TV fortunes nicely. Now that Alternative seem quiet the natural people to do it would seem to be budget maestros Hi-Tec along the lines of *Scooby And Scrappy Doo*, but with that surreal Magic Roundabout atmosphere. We can't wait...

• Speaking of TV shows, there's no getting away from Channel Four's brand new Games Master effort, which comes across like The Crystal Maze crossed with a cyberpunk Top Of The Pops (though our Stuart seems convinced it's a lot more like Blue Peter mixed with The Word!). There's got to be a computer game in here somewhere, though, and following stints on *Captain Planet* and *Knightmare*, Tony Crowther would seem the natural one to bring it out. That bizarre Patrick Moore 'Games Master' thingy would have be in there somewhere, of course, but beyond that we're a bit stuck games design wise. Any good ideas, anyone..?

Steve Turner – along with the new *Robo 3*, our inspiration for new uses for solid 3D. Who knows where it goes from here...

• WWF fans will no doubt have been disappointed that UK Rampage, the Survivors series and all the other competitions they run are suspiciously missing from Ocean's *WWF Wrestlemania* game? Could this be a first for a beat-'em-up – they're intending to include these as data disks, each one containing a few new fighters, a new league table, and (quite possibly) an extra video as well? We should be told...

• Graftgold's Steve Turner mentioning a 3D vector graphic racing yacht game – see page 74 this issue – and Ocean's new *RoboCop 3* both inspire new uses for solid 3D. Like these, for instance... more beat-'em-ups (a la *4D Sports Boxing* and *Robo 3*), wargames which really place you on the ground in a 3D environment (all strategic decisions having to be made from the same sort of limited knowledge a real general would have in such a situation), role playing adventures (the possibilities here are endless), and even a 3D version of *Defender* (a version of this came out on the ZX81, would you believe, and a straight conversion would work a treat on the bigger machines).

• Drag racing games have always been a hopeless failure up until now, but just imagine a Geoff Crammond style game based on late '60s street racing on the streets of America, where hot rodded Mustangs, Camaros and '55 Chevies (all much more interesting shapes than your average GP car) cruise around looking for races. There'd be various scenes where you could buy extra bits of speed equipment for your car with your winners money (or get your car repaired if you wiped out), while run-ins with the cops, bits breaking unexpectedly when overstressed and so on would all add spice to the thing. The centrepoint of the game would be the spectacular races, though – frantic traffic-light-to-traffic-light dashes down public streets, with other 3D cars coming hurtling towards you (something touched upon in *RoboCop 3*). Imagine the imagery of Dead Man's Curve, American Graffiti and numerous Bruce Springsteen songs built into a game – it'd be a winner!

• More 3D – and one that would almost have an educational look-right-look-left-look-right-again sort of element – is a version of arcade classic *Frogger*. The action would be presented from the frog's point of view – you'd have to turn your whole head to see if the cars are coming or not – with the actual leaping action a really odd experience as you bounce across the landscape. Weird!

• Finally, something different. Following Virgin's announcement that they'll be doing a game based on heavy metal band Motorhead, here are some other quick suggestions for bands and suitable game styles. Erasure (a *WWF*-style wrestling game – singer Andy Bell wears the right clothes already!), Electronic (blend any two game styles, and the result won't be as good as either of them on their own), The Osmond Kids (a *Godfather* type shoot-'em-up – you've got to get them all before they breed another generation!), The Cars (a driving game, of course), The Pixies (an *Elf*-style platformer), the (*Snip! -Ed*)

BEAVER PATROL

It's taken some time but the new, revived Grandslam – now Grandslam Video Limited – at last has a handful of products ready for release. First up is the *Liverpool* game – something we've been waiting for for years now – due for release before the end of this season, and featuring, league, FA Cup and European competitions. The second sports game – is this going to be a speciality of the new firm? – is *Nick Faldo's Golf*, a simulation allowing the possibilities of using a modem link and providing the player with a training section based on Faldo's successful training videos. Developed by Arc and due for a late summer release, it's got its work cut out for it – big names EA and MicroProse have both released excellent golf sims over the last year – but the results should anyway be interesting.

And finally, something very different – *Beavers*, an original game developed by *R-Type II* and *Forgotten Worlds* programmers Arc Developments. A four level platform game due for Easter release, this is hopefully more than just be a case of thinking 'Hmm, *Lemmings* was all about a particular race of animals and a big hit, let's do the same.' It features Jethro Beaver on a girlfriend rescuing mission, his mighty tail proving to be an excellent weapon against piranhas, alligators, racoons, evil foxes and hillbilly bears – and who knows? There may even be a bit of dam building in there too! (We can but hope...)

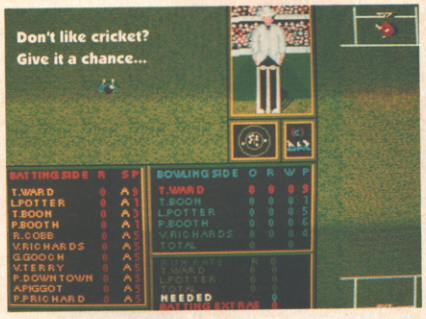
DI'S FIRST DECADE

Digital Integration, currently celebrating a decade in computer games, is actually starting 1992 busier than in quite a while. They've got their futuristic role playing game *Drift* (centred around your character creating a band of intergalactic mercenaries to bring order to the solar system!) scheduled for a March release, followed by their *Tornado* flight sim later in the year.

NINJA ANT?

George Allan, programmer of the ultra-impressive *Switchblade II*, is currently working on the *Robocod/Sonic*-style adventures of a ninja ant(!), currently titled *Zool*. This is a June release from a very busy Gremlin, *Utopia II* and a revived *Litil Divil* but two of an impressive line up.

OH NO! NOT ANOTHER WORLD CUP!



If it's not World Cup soccer, it's World Cup rugby, and if it's not World Cup rugby, it's World Cup... cricket? What's going on here? Well, actually, cricket does have a World Cup – it's held in Australia right now – and while it's not exactly got the profile of the other two, you have to admit that Soundware (who are are rather turning into specialists in the field) would have been rather foolish to let such a thing go by without some sort of commemerative release. The surprising thing, if anything, is that this isn't just a quickly tarted up version of an earlier game (anyone remember US Gold's *World Cup Carnival*?) but quite a new product.

The game, which allows you to choose from nine teams (including the recently re-introduced South Africa), follows a series of one day matches, allowing you to adjust your fielding positions, re-select your bowlers and batsmen, chose from a range of bowling options allowing more control than in their earlier game (including 'Yorkers' and 'Outswingers'!) and play with either one or two players. It's out now at £29.99.

AMIGA POWER RECOMMENDS

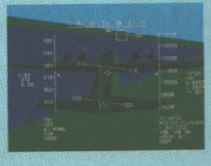
It's all play and no work in the Amiga Power offices. Here are our current special favourites...

CELTIC LEGENDS (Ubi Soft)

A better version of *Lords Of Chaos* than *Lords Of Chaos*, *Celtic Legends* is that most elusive of creatures, a strategy wargame for people who don't really like strategy wargames. It suffers from a slight lack-of-speed problem in one-player mode, but then the fabulous intro makes up for that. Funny, dramatic, atmospheric, pretty damn good all round, really.

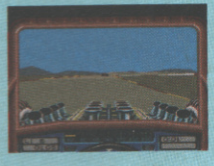
REALMS (Virgin)

Powermonger fans will flip over this one. That said, it's not really a wargame at all (truth be told, it's just an extension of that old number-juggler *Kingdoms*, with lots of battles thrown in), but there's more than enough mayhem to keep the bloodthirstiest strategy fan happy in one of the most successful marriages of two genres we've seen.



BIRDS OF PREY (Electronic Arts)

Okay, so it's kind of on the slow and jerky side, but since when did technical achievement carry any weight with flight sim fans? (Erm...) Whatever, this is still a bit of a stunner, with 40 aircraft to choose from and a huge variety of missions that'll ensure you're playing this for months, even if you do have to take lots of Valium to stop it feeling like years...



STUNT CAR RACER (Kixx)

When the 10th-best Amiga game of all time comes out on budget re-release, it shouldn't take a mathematical genius to work out that you really ought to get a copy. A brilliantly original game, it's more than twice as good if you've a pal with an Amiga that you can link up to, but superbly scary rollercoastering fun in any case.

POPULOUS II (Electronic Arts)

It's taken a long time (well, compared to *Birds Of Prey* it was knocked up in a few hours after a heavy night at the pub, but that's not the point), but it's finally finished, it's in the shops, it's in the charts, and it's likely to stay there for a long, long time to come. A real progression over the ground-breaking classic *Populous*, this isn't just a god game, it's also a god of a game.

SCOOBY DOO AND SCRABBY DOO (Hi-Tec)

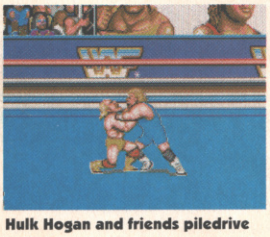
Sneaking stealthily up the charts, but still not fast enough for our liking, there isn't a single reason for any of you still without a copy of this brilliant game not to go out and buy one right now. One of the five best Amiga platform arcade games ever, regardless of the price. Buy it, it's as simple as that.

OCEAN GET A STRANGLEHOLD

WWF Wrestlemania
(New entry, No 1)

Ocean's Jo Cooke was very confident when she said that there could be "no other Christmas number one except for WWF" last issue, and it seems her confidence was well founded. Bet you're feeling pretty pleased with yourself now, eh Jo?

"It really was what we expected. The wrestling is huge in America – just enormous. It only hit this country in late summer, so interest was at just the right level for us to get a game out this Christmas," she replied.



Hulk Hogan and friends piledrive their way to the number one spot.

Certainly, it would seem that WWF fever is at a peak at the moment, with coverage on Sky and numerous magazines pushing the whole thing hard. In fact, Ocean have actually built on the fact that though well known, the actual bouts are still fairly hard to see – the *WWF Wrestlemania* package including a video of real-life fight highlights.

The world-beating *WWF* package is but one example of Ocean's aggressive marketing policies – all their recent big name products featuring some sort of extra freebie in the box. Bart and friends made the number three position in our chart with the help of a free Bart keyring – "Sky TV really helped too, and then the video came out in November. The younger kids absolutely love Bart Simpson" says Jo – while *Robocop 3* (straight in at number six with its hologram thingy) and *Smash TV* (with a free poster) at number 83 propped up the chart for the Manchester software giants. Yes, it was another Ocean Christmas.

Disappointed with *Smash TV* at all then, Jo?

"Not really. *Smash TV* was not a Christmas product as such, being a classic coin-op which will sell strongly for a long time – it's a longrunner".

Well maybe. We're less than convinced that *Smash TV* has quite the pedigree to show that sort of staying power.

***Smash TV* – destined for more chart success, or a swift fall?**

AMIGA POWER GALLUP CHARTS

AMIGA TOP 100

····· Exceptional ····· Nearly there ···· Very good ··· Has its moments ·· Flawed · Dire

1 (NE) WWF WRESTLEMANIA Ocean £25.99 **
2 (NE) POPULOUS 2 Electronic Arts £29.99 *****
3 (NE) THE SIMPSONS Ocean £25.99 ****
4 (NE) HEIMDALL Core Design £34.99 *****
5 (NE) JAMES POND 2 – ROBOCOD Millennium £25.99 *****
6 (NE) ROBOCOP 3 Ocean £25.99 ****
7 (1) LOTUS TURBO CHALLENGE 2 Gremlin Graphics £25.99 *****
8 (NE) BIRDS OF PREY Electronic Arts £34.99 ****
9 (6) JIMMY WHITE'S WHIRLWIND SNOOKER Virgin £29.99 *****
10 (18) NEW ZEALAND STORY Hit Squad £7.99 *****

11 (9) BUBBLE BOBBLE Hit Squad £7.99 *****
12 (NE) LEANDER Psygnosis £25.99 ****
13 (21) LOMBARD RAC RALLY Hit Squad £7.99 ***
14 (NE) OH NO! MORE LEMMINGS Psygnosis £19.99 *** (data disk)
15 (31) SCOOBY DOO AND SCRAPPY DOO Hi-Tec Software £7.99 *****
16 (12) SHADOW OF THE BEAST Sizzlers £7.99 ***
17 (2) ALIEN BREED Team 17 £24.99 ****
18 (10) TV SPORTS: FOOTBALL Mirror Image £9.99 ***
19 (NE) FIRST SAMURAI Vivid Image (Mirrorsoft) £30.99 *****
20 (27) BATMAN THE MOVIE Hit Squad £7.99 ***
21 (5) RETURN TO EUROPE Anco £7.99 ***
22 (15) TERMINATOR 2 Ocean £25.99*
23 (97) CHASE HQ Hit Squad £7.99 **
24 (3) MEGA LO MANIA Image Works £30.99 *****
25 (22) WACKY RACES Hi-tec Software £7.99 ***
26 (NE) DIZZY COLLECTION Code Masters £24.99 ****
27 (17) DRAGON NINJA Hit Squad £7.99 *
28 (4) FINAL FIGHT US Gold £29.99 ****
29 (24) PGA TOUR GOLF Electronic Arts £25.99 *****
30 (19) FANTASY WORLD DIZZY Code Masters £6.99 ****
31 (13) ALTERED BEAST Hit Squad £7.99 **
32 (11) HEAD OVER HEELS Hit Squad £7.99 *****
33 (42) NINJA RABBITS Micro Value £6.99 *
34 (NE) DOUBLE DRAGON 2 Tronix £9.99 ***
35 (NE) STUNT CAR RACER Kixx £7.99 *****
36 (38) MONKEY ISLAND US Gold £29.99 *****
37 (NE) MICROPROSE GOLF MicroProse £34.99 ****
38 (NE) FUN SCHOOL 4 (7-11) Europress Software £24.99 ****
39 (36) MANCHESTER UNITED EUROPE Krisalis £25.99 ****
40 (53) BOARD GENIUS Beau Jolly £29.99 ***
41 (NE) BATTLE ISLE Ubi Soft £30.99 ****
42 (NE) POWERMONGER DATA DISK Electronic Arts £14.99 ***
43 (39) LITTLE PUFF Code Masters £6.99 **
44 (30) PRO BOXING Code Masters £7.99 *
45 (23) TURRICAN Kixx £7.99 ***
46 (NE) SOCCER STARS COMPILATION Empire £25.99 ***
47 (NE) KNIGHTMARE Mindscape £30.99 ***
48 (NE) PITFIGHTER Domark £24.99**
49 (16) FULL CONTACT Team 17 £9.99 ***
50 (NE) FOOTBALL CRAZY CHALLENGE Anco £25.99 **
51(8) POPULOUS Star Performers £10.99 ****
52 (NE) TIP OFF Anco £25.99 ***
53 (7) RUGBY THE WORLD CUP Domark £24.99 ****
54 (34) CRUISE FOR A CORPSE US Gold £27.99 *****
55 (26) POWER DRIFT Hit Squad £7.99 ***
56 (NE) MOONSTONE Mindscape £30.99 ***
57 (NE) ROBOCOP Hit Squad £7.99 ***
58 (NE) WORLD CLASS RUGBY Audiogenic £25.99 ***
59 (NE) 4 WHEEL DRIVE COMPILATION Gremlin Graphics £29.99 ***
60 (NE) DOUBLE DRAGON 3 Storm £25.99 *
61 (73) F15 STRIKE EAGLE MicroProse £29.99 ***
62 (NE) REALMS Virgin £29.99 ****
63 (NE) X-OUT Kixx £7.99 ***
64 (57) LEMMINGS Psygnosis £25.55 *****
65 (RE) MAGIC POCKETS Renegade (Mindscape) £25.99 **
66 (98) KNIGHTS OF THE SKY MicroProse £34.99 *****
67 (20) HEROES OF THE LANCE Kixx £7.99 ***
68 (37) STEVE DAVIS WORLD SNOOKER Blue Ribbon £7.99 **
69 (NE) HOME ALONE Accolade £24.99 **
70 (40) RAINBOW COLLECTION Ocean £19.99 *****
71 (86) FACE OFF Krisalis £25.99 ***
72 (NE) BLUES BROTHERS Titus £25.99 *****
73 (NE) WORLD CRICKET Zeppelin £7.99 **
74 (NE) FUNSCHOOL 4 (5-7) Europress Software £24.99 ****
75 (NE) OH NO! MORE LEMMINGS Psygnosis £25.99 *** (stand alone version)
76 (41) CABAL Hit Squad £7.99 ***
77 (56) WORLD CLASS LEADERBOARD Kixx £7.99 ****
78 (NE) RENEGADE Hit Squad £7.99 ***
79 (48) EYE OF THE BEHOLDER US Gold £30.99 *****
80 (NE) SOCCER MATCH Energize £7.99 **
81 (25) SILENT SERVICE 2 MicroProse £34.99 ****
82 (NE) NORTH AND SOUTH Action Sixteen £7.99 ****
83 (NE) SMASH TV Ocean £25.99 ***
84 (71) MEAN MACHINE Code Masters £7.99 ***
85 (NE) BLACK HORNET Hi Tec Software £7.99 ***
86 (72) TURBO OUTRUN Kixx £7.99 **
87 (43) THUNDERHAWK Core Design £30.99 ****
88 (61) SUPER SPACE INVADERS Domark £24.99 **
89 (32) OUTRUN EUROPA US Gold £25.99 ***
90 (45) GHOSTBUSTERS 2 Hit Squad £7.99 *
91 (49) INDY'S LAST CRUSADE Kixx £7.99 **
92 (58) BLOODWYCH Mirror Image £9.99 ***
93 (76) MIAMI CHASE Code Masters £7.99 ****
94 (35) SUPERCARS GBH £7.99 ***
95 (NE) GOLDRUSH COLLECTION Soundware International £25.99 ***
96 (NE) THE GODFATHER US Gold £30.99 **
97 (NE) INTERNATIONAL NINJA RABBITS Micro Value £7.99 **
98 (NE) VOYAGER Hit Squad £7.99 ****
99 (NE) BEACH VOLLEY Hit Squad £7.99 *
100 (100) FOOTBALL MANAGER Pocket Power £2.99 *****

We figure you must have some idea how the charts work by now, so briefly: they're put together by Gallup, they mix budgies and full pricers together, games are rated in stars, and they're © ELSPA.

BETTER LATE THAN NEVER

Populous 2
(Number 2)

Among the many predictions in the office, this was our favourite for the Christmas number one. But for its late release (just a week before Christmas) *Populous 2* could well have seen off the licensed competition – indeed, we wouldn't be too shocked if it went to the top slot next month.

***Populous 2* – making an appearance at number two, despite its late release. You obviously all read the review in AMIGA POWER.**

Fiona Murphy of Electronic Arts told us, "It's a shame it didn't go to number one because it's a great product, but we're pleased with the position as it reflects only one week's sales. We're confident that it will sell well through the coming year".

And so it should Fiona! We can see *Populous 2* keeping top company in the charts for quite some time to come.

CORE'S VIKING EPIC SCORES A FOUR

Heimdall
(Number 4)

Core go from strength to strength, with *Heimdall* – hacking its way straight into the top five.

Sharon Gordon was the one holding the fort when we called Core (it seems everyone else had gone skiing or something) so we had to ask her about it. Here's what she had to say:

"Considering that *Heimdall* is an unlicensed product released at a highly competitive time of year and up against very strong licensed titles, reaching the top five is fantastic. Next year keep the number one spot open for Core Design!"

Such confidence! (Could this, by any chance, mean that they already know what they've got lined up for next winter? Or is it just the fact that she's alone in the office getting her all over excited? Guess we'll have to wait until Christmas '92 to find out!)

Knightmare

"You are setting forth into another place, another time, another world," said Treguard, The Dungeon Master. "And what makes you think that you four mere mortals will succeed in the Quest, when so many others have failed?"

I understood, at that moment, that our mission was going to take all our endurance, all our collective skill, and, most of all a depth of courage, that I wasn't sure we possessed.

Ever since ITV's award-winning series hit our screens, the world has been waiting for a computer game worthy of the name. The wait is over.

Tony Crowther's amazing re-creation has everything.

Using the same game system that made 'Captive' adventure game of the year for 1990, 'Knightmare' makes dungeons and dragons games seem like newts splashing around in a muddy puddle.

'Knightmare' is a sophisticated role-playing adventure where you are challenged to solve complex puzzles, logic problems and riddles that reveal a rich, ever-more rewarding storyline.

Your journey takes you deep into the dungeons of Dunshelm, to a cataclysmic meeting with Lord Fear and the unthinkably horrible FrightKnight.

Whether or not the meeting is terminal is up to you. You will need wisdom, tenacity, alacrity and, above all, courage.

But you have all those things, don't you...?

CAPTIVE GAME SYSTEM

BROADSWORD

MINDSCAPE

Available for Amiga & Atari ST

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Written by Tony Crowther.

ANGLIA Television Limited

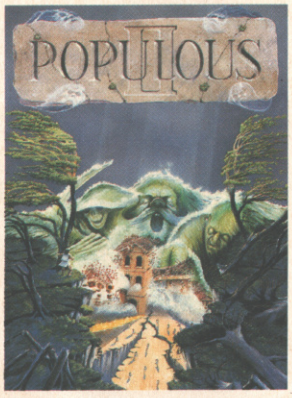
For your local dealer, contact: **Mindscape International Ltd**, The Coach House, Hooklands Estate, Scaynes Hill, West Sussex RH17 7NG Tel: 0444 831 761

THE GODS ARE BACK AND ALL

HELL IS ABOUT TO BREAK LOOSE

Populous II has arrived and it's everything you'd dreamt it might be - and more.

More earthquakes, more volcanoes, more tidal waves,



Available late December for Amiga and ST.

£29.99

more deadly swamps, in fact the most devasting natural disasters known to man, and a few he hasn't heard of yet.

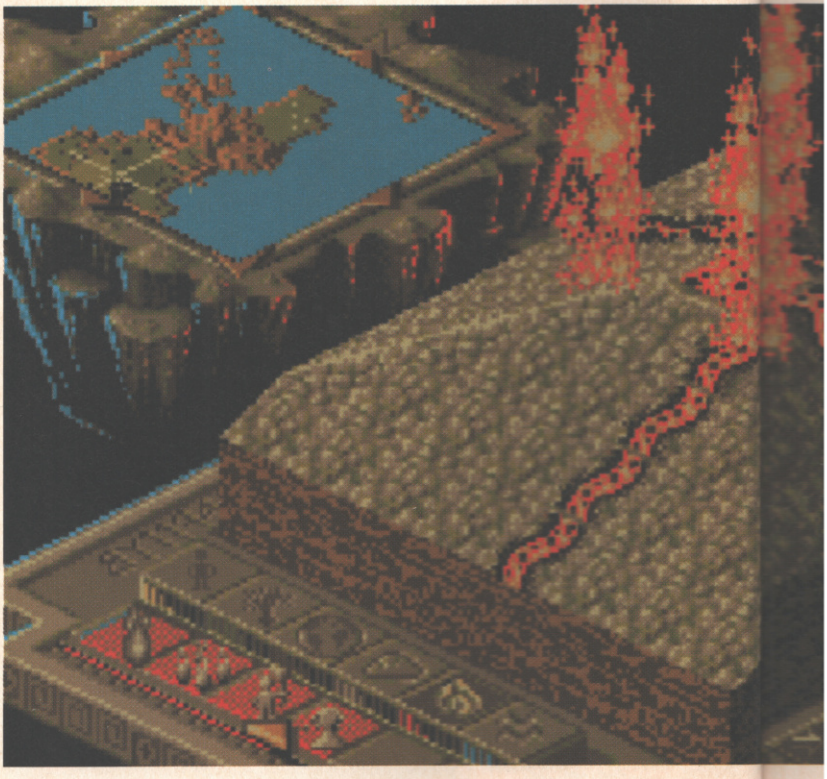
This time you find yourself back in Ancient Greece, where as one of the sons of Zeus himself, your aim is to achieve immortality and take your place next to him on Mount Olympus.

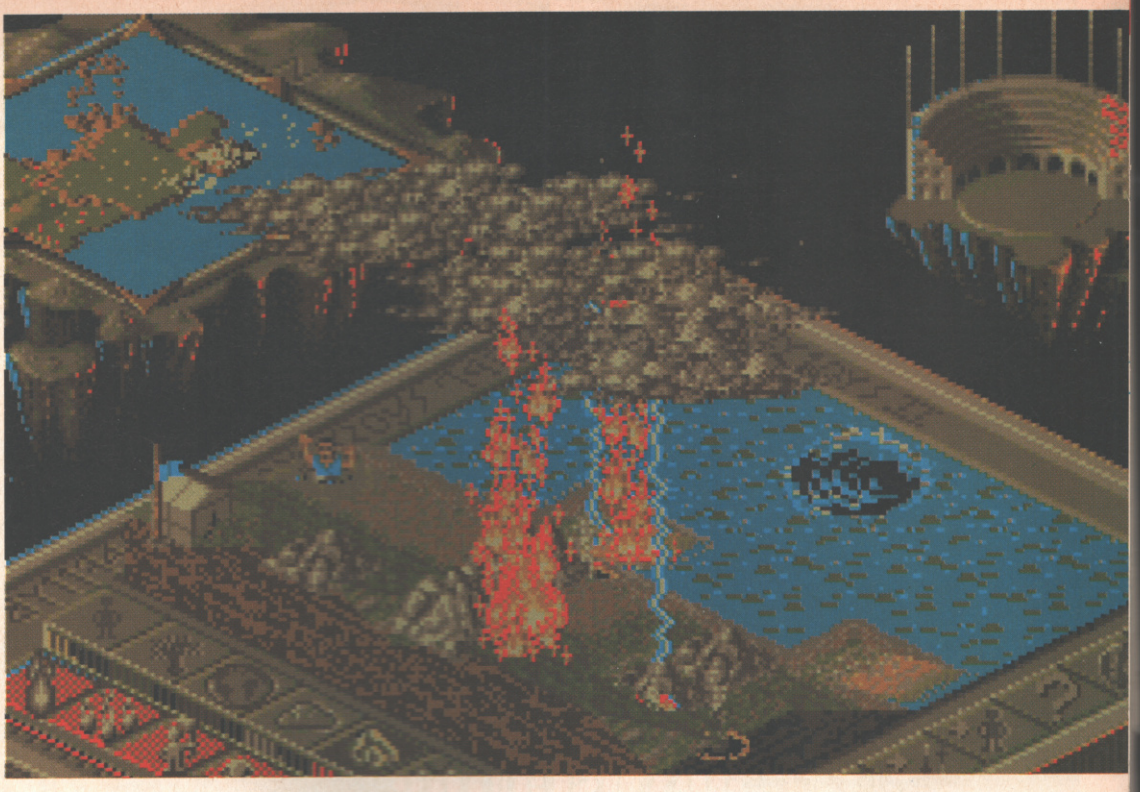
But the old boy isn't going to let you have your way without an almighty fight and he's conscripted 32 of his most powerful deities to stand in the way of your ambitions.

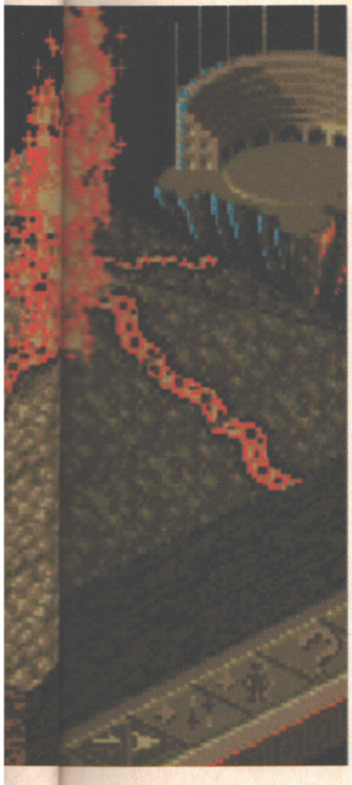
Design your own elaborate settlements with grand houses, roads and trees. Construct city walls in preparation against the oncoming rains of fire, whirlwinds, bolts of lightning and new, especially devious monsters like the foxy Helen of Troy, who leads people to their death with her beauty.

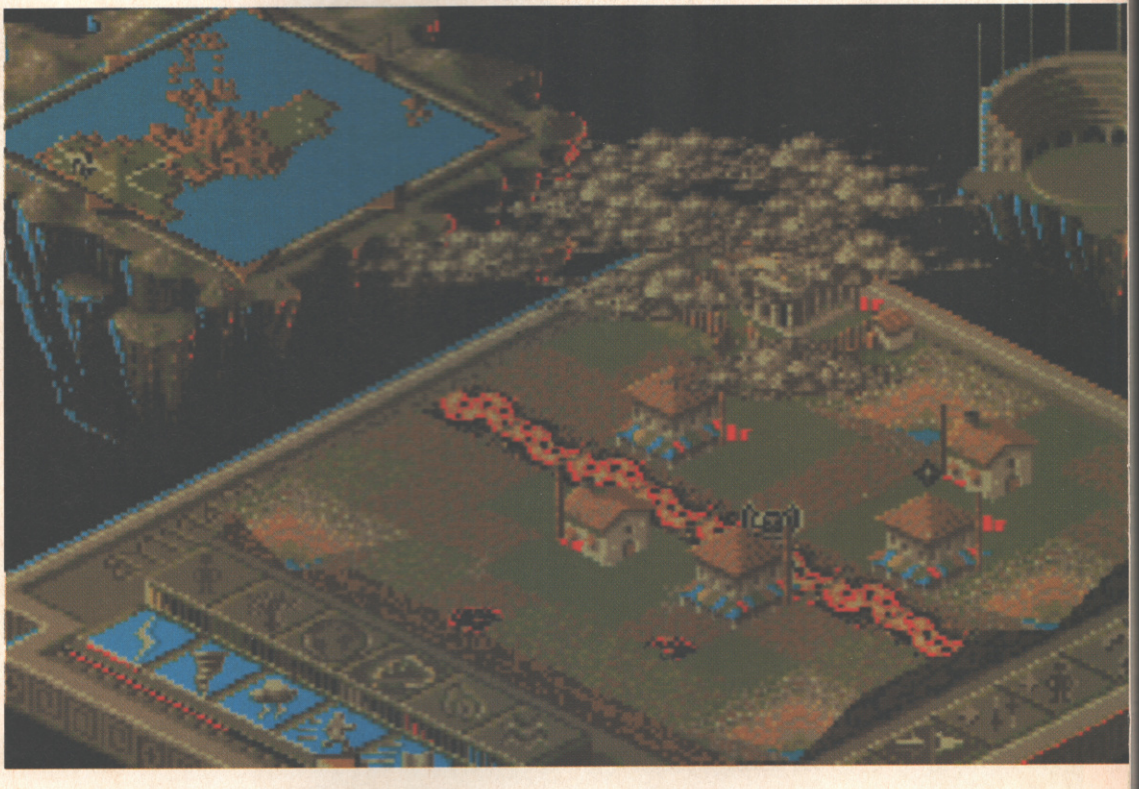
Populous II has 1000 worlds to conquer, 1MB of graphics, 5,000 animations, dozens of new sound effects and a mind-blowing sound track.

To celebrate it's release, you can also collect special Populous II T-shirts, mugs, data disks and interactive clue books from The World of Populous II which you will find in participating retailers.









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Electronic Arts, Langley Business Centre, 11-49 Station Road, Langley, Berks SL3 8YN,
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well? ard!

coin-op madness out now devastating on

TRONIX

100% PURE ENTERTAINMENT

ninja warriors
double dragon II
shinobi
continental circus
xenon
gemini wing
silkworm
double dragon I

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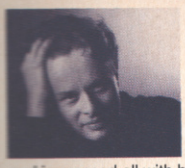
ammy cass *(£3.99)* · **also on PC** *(£9.99)* **double dragon I & II, xenon, shinobi**

well? what are you waiting for?

JUST WHO DO WE THINK WE ARE?



MATT BIELBY

This month Matt ventured into Geordieland, where he was adopted by the Newcastle mafia (it must be his new Gazza haircut), and impressed all with his lambada dancing on New Year's Eve. He's at that funny age, the poor chap.
Matt's been playing: *Mr Wobbly Leg, RoboCop 3, Sonic The Hedgehog* on the Mega Drive

LISA NICHOLLS

Santa must have been reading Lisa's Christmas list in last month's issue of AP, becuase she's now the proud tenant of a new flat. The trouble is, the poor girl is convinced that it's haunted. Some people are never happy...
Lisa's been playing: *Puggles, Lemmings*, and the Evil Dead video

MARK RAMSHAW

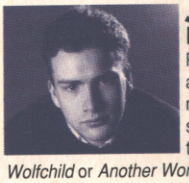
Christmas for Mark meant boogying on down at lots of trendily alternative clubs and watching Bill & Ted movies. Any suggestions on how to stop him shouting 'most triumphant', 'bogus', and playing his air guitar most welcome...
Mark's been playing: *Another World, Leander, OctaMed* (a music disk), *Another World* (again)

NEIL WEST

Neil is now our Channel Four correspondent (along with the wise old Mr Penn), thanks to his rise to fame on the Gamesmaster TV series. Will his life ever be the same? He seems to think not. "Next stop Wogan!" he told us...
Neil's been playing: *Elvira (The Arcade Game), Puggles, Knights Of The Sky*

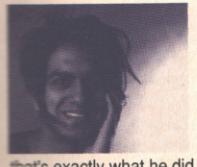
STUART CAMPBELL

Stuart's just returned from home in Scotland, bringing back chewy Irn Bru bars, tales of alcoholic excess and some snazzy shirts (all black of course). He'd also like to advise all 'mature' readers to catch the new Gerry Sadowitz TV show.
Stuart's been playing: *Another World, Squamble*, and *Wolfchild*



JONATHAN DAVIES

Poor Jonathan. It's been another 'decent game free' month for our long suffering freelancer. You'd think we'd have given him *Wolfchild* or *Another World* to review, it being the season of goodwill and all, but no. How we laughed.
Jonathan's been playing: *Another World, Puggles*, and more 'foreign games'



RICH PELLEY

You'd probably expect young upstart Rich to have spent his Christmas hols chasing girlies and going to parties. And yes, that's exactly what he did (the cad). At least you know where you stand with him...
Rich's been playing: *Exile* (again), *First Samurai*, and numerous 'mistletoe games'(!)

MATTHEW SQUIRES

Swanky Matthew is now the owner of a groovy 1950's Rover, which can be seen rolling through the streets every morning (with Matthew pushing behind). He's also been learning the ancient art of disk swapping...
Matthew's been playing: *Knights Of The Sky, Godfather* (all six disks of it!) and *Battle Isle*

GARY PENN

Gary's not had a good Chrimbo. After catching flu, crashing a hire car, and getting drenched in his leaky flat things have gone from bad to worse. Still, he's been to Scotland ("It's beautiful") and is still in love. Ahhh!
Gary's been playing: *Formula One Grand Prix, Lotus 2*, but, chiefly, *Chase HQ* (!)

KARL FOSTER

Children are Karl's new found passion, courtesy of a nephew with a world record in screaming. Luckily we calmed his nerves by pushing *Mercenary III* his way. Just you wait, he'll become a kindergarten teacher yet...
Karl's been playing: *Carrier Command, Celtic Legends*, and his guitar

AMANDA COOK

Amanda got a Game Gear for Christmas and we haven't seen her since. There's been talk of an op to have it surgically removed, but medical science is worried. We're hoping to lure her back to the office with a game of *Bubble Bobble* or *Dizzy* – fingers crossed (or we'll have to do next month's issue in crayon).
Amanda's been playing: with her Game Gear

STEVE CAREY

Ever wondered what a publisher looks like? No, didn't think so, but seeing as we've got this little space to fill and nobody else to go in it, here's our brand new boss. Steve loves 'interesting' Irish author James Joyce, but (especially) his brand new baby son, also called James (after guess who). Aww.
Steve's been playing: *Dad* (AP4). Ho ho

GAMES

Christmas may have been and gone, but that doesn't mean we haven't got loads of game reviews for you. From the sublime *Another World* to the likes of *Space Ace II*, it's a month of the dazzling, the dangerous, and the dire. Two long-awaited Ocean Christmas titles get the full AP treatment too, namely *RoboCop 3* and *WWF*.

***Hearts of China* – gorge!**

What, you want to know more? Well, how about *Hearts Of China*, Sierra's latest epic graphic adventure? Or if straight arcade games are more your thang, we've got *Wolfchild* – Core's hairy platform romp – under the spotlight. Even the much hyped *Godfather* arcade game, and long-awaited *Mercenary III*, made it into the offices in time for inclusion this issue.

***Indy 500* – compiled!**

Let's not forget our more concise, though no less satisfying, selection of smaller reviews either, including *Cisco Heat* (Mirrorsoft's last game), *Elvira* in her arcade incarnation, and a quite bizarre new *Steve McQueen* game. (Whoever denied the French were weird?)

In fact, there's so much on offer you're probably wasting your time reading this far at all! Go on, flip the page, and find out why AP offers the most authorative and informative games guide there is...

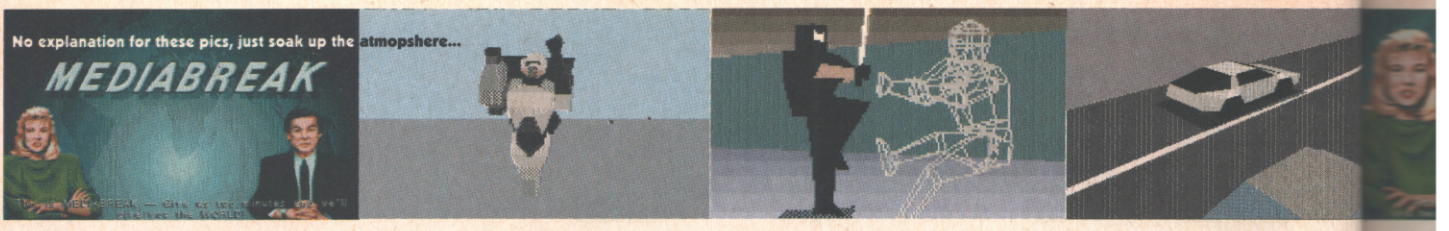
THE AMIGA POWER SCORING SYSTEM (AND HOW IT WORKS): AN EASY-TO-USE BEGINNERS GUIDE

The AMIGA POWER reviewing philosphy is an absolute doddle to understand. Really, it's simple. But hey, some of you are reading this bit, so you must be at least a *mite* confused. Here, then, is a brief run-down on the ins and outs of it, layman style.

1) We're painfully aware of how much software costs, which is why we believe a game has to be *really* good to be worth buying – *or* worth giving a good mark. Happily, there's more than enough worthwhile stuff around if only you can find it – pointing you in the right direction is one reason AMIGA POWER exists. That's why we mark as hard as we do – we believe it's the only way to tell you if a game's worth buying...

2) We believe rating systems should be simple and easy to understand. That's why we just give one mark out of 100, a few summing up sentences, and that's it. Who wants more?

3) What, a third point? Get outta the pool!



Game: RoboCop 3
Publisher: Ocean
Authors: Martin Kenwright, David Dixon, Jamie Cansdale, Russ Payne, Phil Allsopp, Shaun Hollywood, Paul Hollywood, Ian Boardman and others at Digital Image Design Ltd, Maniacs Of Noise (music and SFX).
Price: £25.99
Release: Out now

ROBO

Right at the very tail end of 1991 came an astounding game,

There's one big problem doing computer game magazines at Christmas. None of the big games are ever ready – or, at least, ready if you insist on reviewing finished versions as we do (© Quick Digs At Other Mags Inc) – in time for review in the pre-Christmas issues, so poor punters (like you) have to buy effectively blind, hoping that this or that big name is really as good as the software house responsible hopes you think it is. There's not much we can do about it, I'm afraid.

BETTER LATE THAN NEVER, I GUESS

That being the case, you'll quite probably already know that a) *RoboCop 3* comes with a 'free' and okay-ish hologram of the Delta City dick in the box, b) that it uses a special Electronic Key (or 'dongle') which you need to link to your computer before you can load the game up at all (the latest in high tech protection devices from Ocean – see True Stories for more details), and c) that – hurrah! – the game's actually rather good.

Bloody good in fact – arguably the best full price release Ocean have had in over a year, and a ground breaking product in its own right. More on that later.

First off though – and sorry about this Ocean – a bit of a whinge. The first one is to do with the dongle. Apart from a half-hearted sticker on the front and a scrappy piece of paper inside the box it doesn't mention the damn thing anywhere in the packaging, particularly the instruction manual where the loading instructions are exactly the same as for a normal game. Let's just hope nobody tries to load *Robo 3* from the instructions given in the manual (where it not only fails to mention that you have to put this funny metal-and-plastic thing in your joystick port, but also refers to 'Disk A' and 'Disk B' when the things you get in the box are quite clearly labelled Disks 1, 2, and 3!). End of whinge.

The game, then. For starters, you can forget about the film. Yes, the game does have some plot similarities – particularly the fights with a superpowered Japanese ninja robot sent to test his mettle against our hero – but beyond that it's anybody's guess as to whether this really provides an experience similar to the movie or not. And frankly, who cares anyway? The staff at programmers DiD have apparently never seen the Frank Miller-scripted flick, and managed to get only the minimum of movie stills to look at for visual reference during the course of development, while publishers Ocean have made no attempt to tie the release in with the film's arrival in this country.

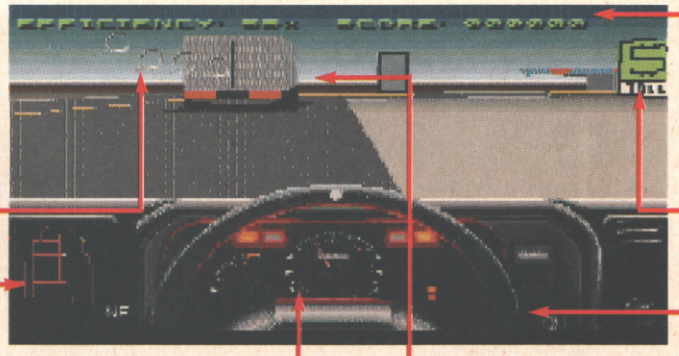
"The best full price release Ocean have had in over a year, and a ground breaking product in its own right"

Linking things tightly to the film seems to have been of low priority with everyone concerned. 'About time too!' it's tempting to comment when one remembers the low standard of recent movie games – to all intents and purposes what we have here is a totally original product, and it should be treated as such.

Don't trust a quick synopsis of the game then. A quick glance at that would have you think this is built up of five sub-games in the established Ocean film game tradition, but nothing could be more deceiving. Yes, there *are* five distinct sub

CAR WARS, ROBO-STYLE

The life of a patrol man is not an easy one (even if you are made of metal) – the driving sequence from *Robo 3*...



Score – useless; efficiency – useless. Oh dear, we're not doing too well, are we?

See what we mean? We barely got out on the road and some people took pot shots at our windscreen here. Yikes!

This signpost says 'toll.' That's because there's a toll bridge coming up – try and make it through without taking half the car off on a toll booth in the process!

This scrolling map thing down here is super-duper hunky dory useful. It gives you the layout of the main roads in the central part of Detroit, building up to form a maze you play your games of automotive cat-and-mouse on. One dot is you, the other's whichever baddie you're pursuing, but beware! Keep your eye on this too long and you may plough right into another car!

Flashing lights and whizzy dials might look very nice – the only one that actually does anything is the speedo. Here you can see how fast you're going – not in actual mph, but as a proportion of the 360 degrees of the dial. (If the arrow's pointing to the right you know you're going quite fast!)

Enemy truck ahead! That door you see opening up there is about to reveal men with machine guns! (The same ones who are responsible for the holes in your windscreen already). Watch out – even RoboCop can't take too much of that sort of punishment!

Here's your steering wheel – your mouse controls the white dot near the top, while you accelerate with one mouse button, brake/reverse with the other.

COP 3

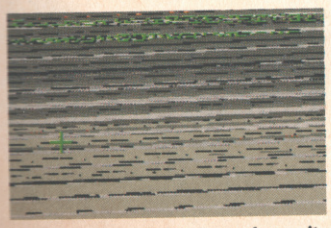
one that found new uses for solid 3D, and redefined our ideas of film licences...

games – two of them shoot-'em-ups, one a beat-'em-up, plus driving and flying sections – but these aren't what you'd expect. Instead of some sort of platform effort these are solid 3D constructions – and fast, smooth 3D at that. They're not linear either – by which I mean, you aren't forced to perform tasks in a set order, but can wander around at will – so perhaps comparing them to the missions you get in flight sims would be more appropriate than likening them to the sequences in *Batman The Movie* or whatever.

SOLID 3D WITH ADDED SOUL

It's rarely, if ever, that 3D has be used so effectively to depict anything other than high-tech weaponry either. Instead of appearing soulless and rather lacking in character – surely factors that prevented The Assembly Line's *Cybercon 3* from being a bigger hit than it was – this very effectively plunges you directly into RoboCop's world. With this and *F-29 Retaliator* (a very shoot-'em-uppy flight sim) behind them, DiD seem determined to take solid 3D out of the realms of po-faced, 'serious' simulations, and into the more mainstream action arena, and in their hands the style seems to be taking to it like a duck to water.

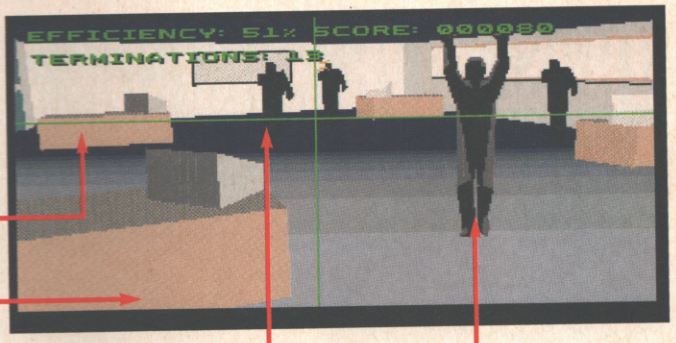
The individual sub games, then, we'll deal with in a separate side-bar. Before we do that though we've first got to mention the presentation, which is, to make no bones about it, seriously excellent. The music is the first thing that hits you – moody, repetitive and quite simply brilliant.



No, the screen grab *hasn't* gone funny – it goes like this when RoboCop gets shot.

OP WOLF, ROBOCOP STYLE – YOU'VE NEVER SEEN A DUCK SHOOT LIKE THIS!

We're in bog-standard mode at the moment – looking out through RoboCop's eyes if you like – and this is what we can see. Those messages play across the inside of his visor.



These crosshairs have two uses – when walking, you move in the direction you point them in, when shooting your bullets go straight for the intersection of the cross.

3D office furniture and so on is realistic – you can't walk through it, for instance – and helps build up the impression of a realistic 3D world.

There are numerous bad guys hiding at the back here – shoot 'em Robo! (And keep your eyes peeled for any who might sneak up and attack you from just outside your range of vision too).

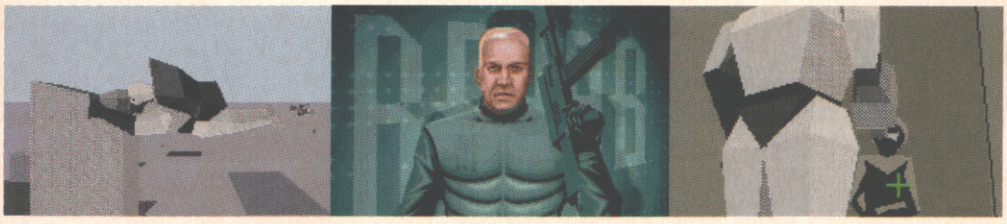
Leave this guy alone though – he's a completely innocent hostage!

It sets the scene, it builds tension throughout the game – getting fast and more desperate as Robo's power fades – occasionally cutting out for silent patches, then building up again, sometimes even managing to act as an ironic counterpoint (something I remember, or *think* I remember, from film crit classes) to the on-screen action. Music rarely gets much of a mention in AMIGA POWER reviews, so to justify a whole paragraph it must be something, eh?

That's only the beginning of it though. From the film-like titles to the disk swapping messages (for crying out loud!) the look and feel of the game is supremely atmospheric. In achieving this DiD have been helped by the look of the films, of course – the first two, and no doubt the third too, are constantly punctuated by sequences seen through RoboCop's own eyes, with gunsights flicking on and off, computer messages flashing across his visor and so on, and DiD reproduce this look to great effect. In the sequences where you see things from Robo's point of view – and though the external views are nice to look at, they're not really very playable – these visor messages usefully hold information about energy levels and so on, but DiD take the RoboCop look a step or two further. When RoboCop gets shot, the screen goes crackly and static-ridden for a moment, the controls failing to respond while his systems recover. When he crashes the car his windscreen smashes, bullet holes crack the glass, and thin lines flick across the entire visual display. These are tricks that worked superbly in the film, and do equally well here too, truly putting you in RoboCop's size 11 cast-iron shoes.

"It's rarely, if ever, that 3D has be used so effectively to depict anything other than hi-tech weaponry"

The main storytelling trick of the films, of course, was the TV news bulletins that constantly punctuated the action. And what do you know but the game uses them too – Jess Perkins and Casey Wong, our friendly Mediabreak hosts, introducing the sections of the game and commentating on the action. While they're a nice touch to the various individual action sequences, Jess and Casey really come into their own in the Interactive Movie version of the game, where they help move the action along quite nicely. →



Ah, yes. I haven't mentioned that yet, have I? You see, perhaps the most important thing about the game is that it can be played in two ways. First up you have the Arcade Action option. This allows you to play each of the games five main sequences as a stand alone mission, with its own plot line and objectives.

ROBOCOP 3 – GRAPHIC & NOVEL

This is fun as a training exercise and great for the impatient (like me), but things really start moving if you opt to play the whole thing as one big adventure instead. Here you get essentially the same sequences, but with more characters, different baddies, and attached to a solid, if much-twisting, plot line. Those familiar with the comics work of film scriptwriter Frank Miller (Batman: The Dark Knight, Elektra: Assassin, Give Me Liberty etc) will have some idea of the sort of story elements you'll encounter – the Japanese buy-out of OCP, the company that runs Detroit; the rise of ultraviolent 'splatterpunk' gangs; mercenaries from some futuristic Amazon war zone brought in as even-more-violent special police; social injustice on a massive scale; rival ninja robots on the rampage and so on.

In game terms it all moves at a cracking pace, and happily allows the player some degree of freedom in the order he executes his various tasks – you can abandon any one particular mission and go off to do something else at pretty much any point in the game, and your doing this will effect in some small way what the baddies do and how the plot unfolds. It comes closer to the concept of an interactive movie than anything we've seen yet – perhaps even more than things like *Another World* because it allows you more freedom of movement.

There's little else to say really, except what a great game. In two ways it's phenomenal – as a way of depicting a film in game form it simply eclipses all that's gone before, and as a way of using solid 3D to depict something other than hi-tech planes it breaks new ground too. Buy it unless (as its high Christmas chart placing would suggest) you've actually gone out and done so already.

● *MATT BIELBY*

UPPERS After a few false starts here and there, solid 3D is finally proved very effective as a way of depicting people, cars, buildings and other down to earth objects. This is a spectacular film game, the individual sequences providing some of the best driving and shoot-'em-up action of the year, while the Movie Adventure version simply sets unprecedented standards for this sort of thing.

DOWNERS Though large for a film game, there probably still isn't as much here as a good number of the original 3D games. Buyers of the first two *RoboCop* games are really in for a shock too!

THE BOTTOM LINE

Right at the very tail end of 1991 came Ocean's best full pricer in ages and one of the games of the year. Impressive and deservedly a great success.

85 PERCENT

THOSE FIVE ROBOCOP 3 SUB-GAMES IN FULL:

DRIVING

Flight sim-style, you get a choice of internal and external views, like this one.

The first section you come to in the Movie version of the game, this puts you behind the wheel of a squad car on a mission that takes place around the streets of Detroit. The play area is impressively large – a network of wide interstates and smaller roads dotted with buildings, road signs, other cars and distinctive landmarks (like toll gates and the police headquarters).

Whether you're playing this as an individual mission or part of the larger story, RoboCop must react fast to the missions given him. One minute he'll be pursuing a stolen vehicle down the highway, the next a van load of terrorists armed with machine guns. The car is fast and steering (fairly) easy to master, while a neat little map of the streets mounted in his centre console allows you to follow the baddies around the map.

Generally a very atmospheric rendition of driving round a city at night – good enough to rank as one of the year's better driving games, despite the fact that it's only one element of a larger product.

STREET FIGHT

Behind this surrendering prisoner lurks a baddie, and – yay! – we've got him!

One of two fairly similar shoot-'em-up sequences, a 3D walk round a maze of back streets (effectively narrow corridors in the main), shooting vicious 'splatterpunks' and leaving innocent civilians well alone. It's vaguely reminiscent of walking down the corridors of *Cybercon III* (or Probe's new *Alien III* game), but perhaps better than both – the dark streets, shadowy environment and chance of danger lurking around every corner work extremely well, while the actual action – quickly moving your on-screen cross hairs into a position where they're aimed at an aggressor, then blasting them (often between the arms or legs of innocent civilians, as seen in the first film) – is as exciting as any ten *Operation Wolf* games, which it vaguely resembles.

It's easy to get lost, despite the impressively detailed nature of the individual streets and walls, but heading in the direction that the majority of baddies seem to be coming from generally seems to do the trick. Quite simply, a great shoot-'em-up.

HOSTAGE SITUATION

Taking the lift, RoboCop style. Here we're using another of the external views.

Very similar to the street fight mission, only here your innocents are hostages (they're the ones standing with their hands up), while your surroundings are of the potted plants and computer terminals variety, as found in any large office building. Booby trapped doorways, grenade throwing terrorists and neat lift rides (you walk into the elevator, shoot the up arrow, and you're onto the next floor!) add to the feeling of menace. Just like *Die Hard*!

FLYING

You'll believe a cyborg can fly! RoboCop shows off with his nifty new Gyropack.

Without having seen the film I found the idea of a RoboCop flight sim slightly hard to imagine, but here it is and it works a treat. The area you get to buzz around – massive jet pack attached to your back – is fairly small, and getting shot down is exceptionally easy, but nipping between the towering sky scrapers of the Detroit city centre isn't something you're going to forget in a hurry. Perhaps the sequence of the game that made least impression on me, but that doesn't mean it's bad.

CLOSE QUARTER COMBAT

Clunky old RoboCop takes a beating from the mysterious black clad Otomo. Oof!

Now this really is Frank Miller stuff – Robocop and Otomo, an incredibly acrobatic ninja robot, must fight it out to the death. Robo has a range of clunky beat-'em-up moves and the opportunity to use his gun (high speed was never one of our hero's great virtues) while Otomo leaps about like a mad thing. Set in Detroit (as the film is) it's tempting to see this as some sort of ironic comment on the decline of the US motor industry – Robo, a big, chunky Buick of a cyborg, quite literally getting rings run around him by the 16-valve, turbocharged Otomo. (But, erm, maybe not).

STORM
SALES CURVE

BIG RUN

"HIT THE ROAD!!"
"WHAT ROAD?"

Pinned to your seat, engine howling, wheels spitting gravel and the marathon begins - you're about to encounter the six toughest stages of the gruelling Paris to Dakar rally. Your supercharged car may be built to be driven through hell and back, but to qualify for each stage you'll need every ounce of the driving skills you possess. No Sunday drivers or lunch breaks please - this one's strictly for the pro-rallying crew.

Screen shots from Amiga version.

"Big Run will undoubtedly test the skills, reflexes and intelligence of even the most adept racing fanatic". Games X

"If this is the kind of stuff we can expect from the Storm label, let's hope it pours down". ST Action

Available: January 1992
Amiga £25.99 • Atari ST £25.99

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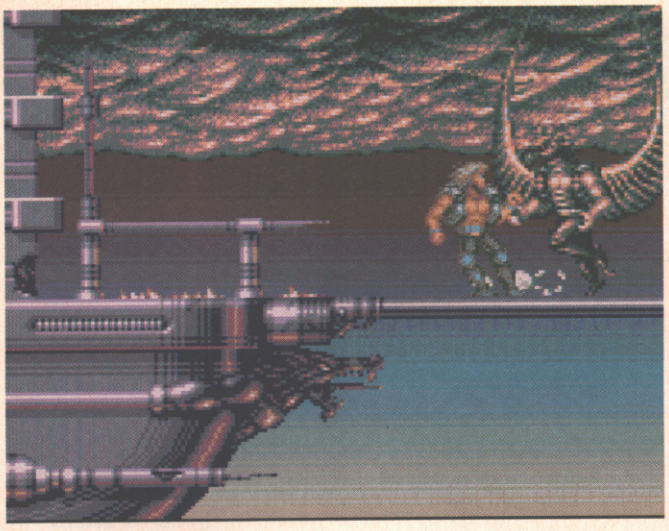
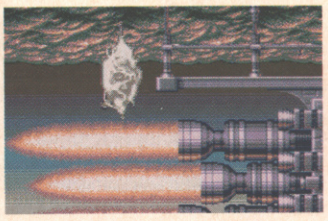
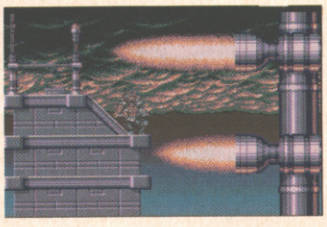


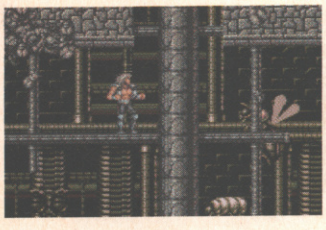
On meeting the first end-of-level boss, Saul swiftly back-pedals, but he needn't worry really – old Birdman here is pretty wimpy, and a few good slaps will see him off.



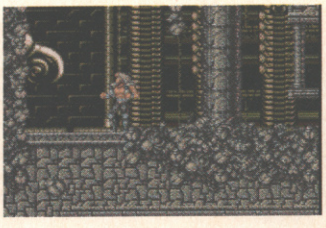
Top Wolfchild Tip No. 1 – at the start of the first level, don't go left



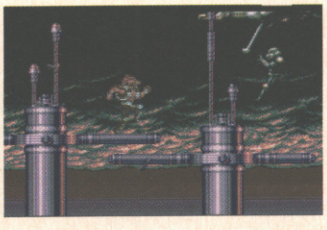
Crouching beneath two big jets, Saul tries not to become a flame-grilled whopper.



In level three, you'll meet beasties with the unnerving ability to float through floors.

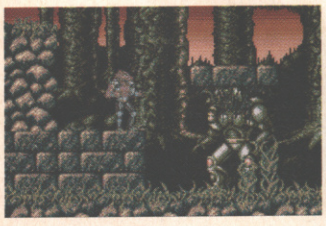


In a Dr Doolittle-esque scenario, Saul can use his animal chums to help him out.

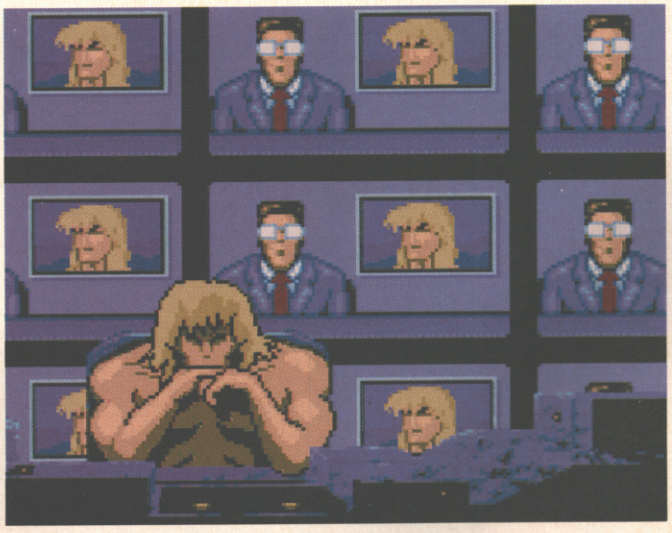


Our hero, in his hairier form, encounters a bad guy dropped on him from a glider.

Hey, we haven't used the old 'I used to be a werewolf but I'm all right...'(*Snip! -Ed*)



The level 2 boss is a real weed – just keep out of his way and punch a lot.



Saul, the Wolfchild himself, ponders over the kidnapping of his father. This looks like a job for a lycanthrope, which is a bit of a happy coincidence really.

We've had *Switchblade*, and *Switchblade II*. Now comes, erm, another *Switchblade II*.

Game: Wolfchild
Publisher: Core Design
Authors: John Kirkland (programming), Simon Phipps (design)
Price: £25.99
Release: Out now

There've been a lot of pretty great wolves through history, lycanthrope fans: White Fang, The Big Bad, Lon Chaney Jnr, Citizen 'Wolfie' Smith, Michael J. Fox's Teen Wolf (okay, so we're stretching the definition of 'great' just a bit here), the American Werewolf In London, um, Johnny Alpha's mate Wulf Sternhammer, er – oh yeah, proto-feminist author Virginia Woolf, and, uh, top dead German dude Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, of course. (*You're fired -Ed*).

But there haven't, as far as I can remember, been any great baby wolves. Luckily, Wolfchild hasn't got anything whatsoever to do with baby wolves, so that's not important. Nope, Core's *Wolfchild* is actually an unfortunate character called Saul, whose father has been kidnapped and the rest of his family slaughtered by the evil Draxx. Conveniently, though, Saul is afflicted with the power to turn into a spooky man-wolf character armed with psychic weapons, and thus armed he sets off through five levels of all the usual old platforms and slimy beasties to kill Draxx and free his dad. What psychological traumas await the pair of them as they try to re-adjust to home life without the rest of the family are, perhaps wisely, left to the sequel.

IN WITH A SILVER BULLET

Wolfchild comes to you from the drawing board of Simon Phipps, the man behind the original *Switchblade*. You can tell, too, because *Wolfchild* is so similar to that earlier game in a number of ways that it's probably almost fair to call this the true *Switchblade II* (Simon had nothing to do with the sequel published earlier this year by Gremlin, and is on record as not caring for it much). The basic game structure is almost identical

Except it isn't really

WOLFCHI

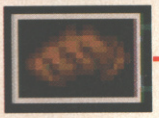
LEAN, MEAN, AND WOLVERINE

Here's a quick guide to the world of the wolf.

Punch or shoot these and they'll explode, revealing some useful power-up or bonus and suchlike.

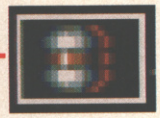
This shows you which letters you've collected towards an extra life.

Whereas this one shows you how close you are to grabbing a big points bonus.



This icon indicates which weapon you're currently using – here it's your bare hands.

Your hero himself – check out that, er, unusual physique.



These smart bombs will kill almost anything instantly, but you don't get many.

to *Switch I* (lots of platform-leaping, hidden rooms hiding behind destructible walls, power-ups and bonuses concealed inside destructible containers littering the playing area, limited-use power-up weapons), many of the enemies look like characters from the original game beefed up a bit, even the 'BONUS' and 'EXTRA' letter-collecting for bonus points and extra lives is the same. There's no escaping it, if you played *Switchblade* you'll feel awfully at home here.

Unfortunately, *Wolfchild* also shares many of *Switchblade*'s deficiencies, expands on some of them and then adds a few of its own. The biggest irritation is the *Rick Dangerous*-style invisible danger (*Oh no, here we go again -Everybody in the whole world*). While this did pop up occasionally in *Switchblade*, it's much more heavily used here, at least in the later levels. I'm fed up of droning on and on about why it's such a bad thing, but let's just say that this kind of pure laziness can really take the fun out of a game, not by making it harder – because it doesn't, all you have to do to avoid it is go very very slowly, inching along a pixel at a time so that you never run headlong into anything before you can react to it – but by wrecking the pace and making the game a real chore to trek through rather than a joy.

Similarly, the way that some enemies can take upwards of a dozen hits before they die is a ridiculous notion in a platform arcade game – if people want *Final Fight* they'll go out and buy *Final Fight*, or any of a dozen other real beat-'em-ups, rather than look for their fighting thrills in a platform game. In a platform game the trick is to work out how your enemy moves, discover his weak spot, then get in there and hit it without getting hit yourself. Having to hit it over and over again (some of the level three baddies, for example, are actually more persistent than the end-of-level guardians from levels one and two), is a complete pain in the backside, and indefensible from a design point of view. All it does is slow you up and get you heartily sick of seeing the same old scenery, especially since when you die you almost always get sent right back to the start of the level.

"A lifeless, uninspiring run-of-the-mill hack-'em-up"

Then again, it only took me 10 minutes of play to reach the third of the game's five levels, so maybe slowing down the pace is a deliberate ploy by the programmers to distract attention from how little of *Wolfchild* there actually is. Or possibly to distract attention from the slightly ropey nature of the parallax scrolling when things get moving at any kind of serious rate. Then again, the preposterous-looking animation of your physically-freakish hero (Arnold Schwarzenegger's body on top of Bonnie Langford's legs) as he runs does a pretty good job of that by itself. (Mind you, you probably won't notice any of these things, as you'll more than likely have been driven into some kind of dribbling stupor by the completely awful background music. Oh God, that background music. Please, Matt, can we have Harry Connick Jnr on again? Anything's better than this...)

That man-to-wolf transformation sequence in full. Time for Saul to (ahem) paws for thought.

Confused? Well...

OOH, YOU BITCH

Alright, alright, so *Wolfchild* isn't so bad that it really justifies putting the boot in like that (I mean, Harry Connick Jnr... come on, nothing's that hideous). It does boast some atmospheric graphics (level three is particularly nice, in a horribly creepy, claustrophobic kind of way, and level two is pleasingly reminiscent of the Forest Of Arborea in the Flash Gordon movie), and the gameplay is harmless enough in a generic kind of way. But really, look beneath the superficially interesting surface and what you've got here is a lifeless, undemanding and uninspiring run-of-the-mill hack-'em-up that's much more in the *Frenetic/Warzone* division of Core's catalogue than the *Chuck Rock/Thunderhawk/Heimdall* camp. After about 45 minutes of it I found myself wandering around the office offering to review *Graeme Souness's Vector Soccer*, or make the tea, or clean the windows, or just anything else at all, really. When a game exerts such a loose grip on a player that Graeme Souness seems like an attractive proposition by comparison, it really is time to start worrying.

● *STUART CAMPBELL*

SWITCHBLADE II VS SWITCHBLADE II

Okay, so we know which one's the real *Switchblade II*, but which one's the better game? Let's see...

GRAPHICS
Switchblade II 9 ***Wolfchild*** 8
A close call here, but the bright, deep colours, Japanese console game look and sheer variety of *Switchblade II* wins out over *Wolfchild*'s darkly atmospheric but slightly rough-around-the-edges style.

SOUND
Switchblade II 6 ***Wolfchild*** –1
Okay, *Switchblade II* might be a bit on the minimalistic side, but at least it doesn't make your eardrums bleed.

LASTING APPEAL
Switchblade II 9 ***Wolfchild*** 4
You'll finish *Wolfchild* inside a couple of days, but lots of people still can't get to the end of *Switchblade II*.

SIMILARITY TO *SWITCH I*
Switchblade II 3 ***Wolfchild*** 9
Switchblade II scores for having almost the same first level as the original game and a high level of graphical continuity, and the word 'Switchblade' in its title, but *Wolfchild* runs away with this category by dint of more or less actually being the same game.

SIMILARITY TO *SWIV*
Switchblade II 1 ***Wolfchild*** 0
Well, *Switchblade II* starts with the same three letters...

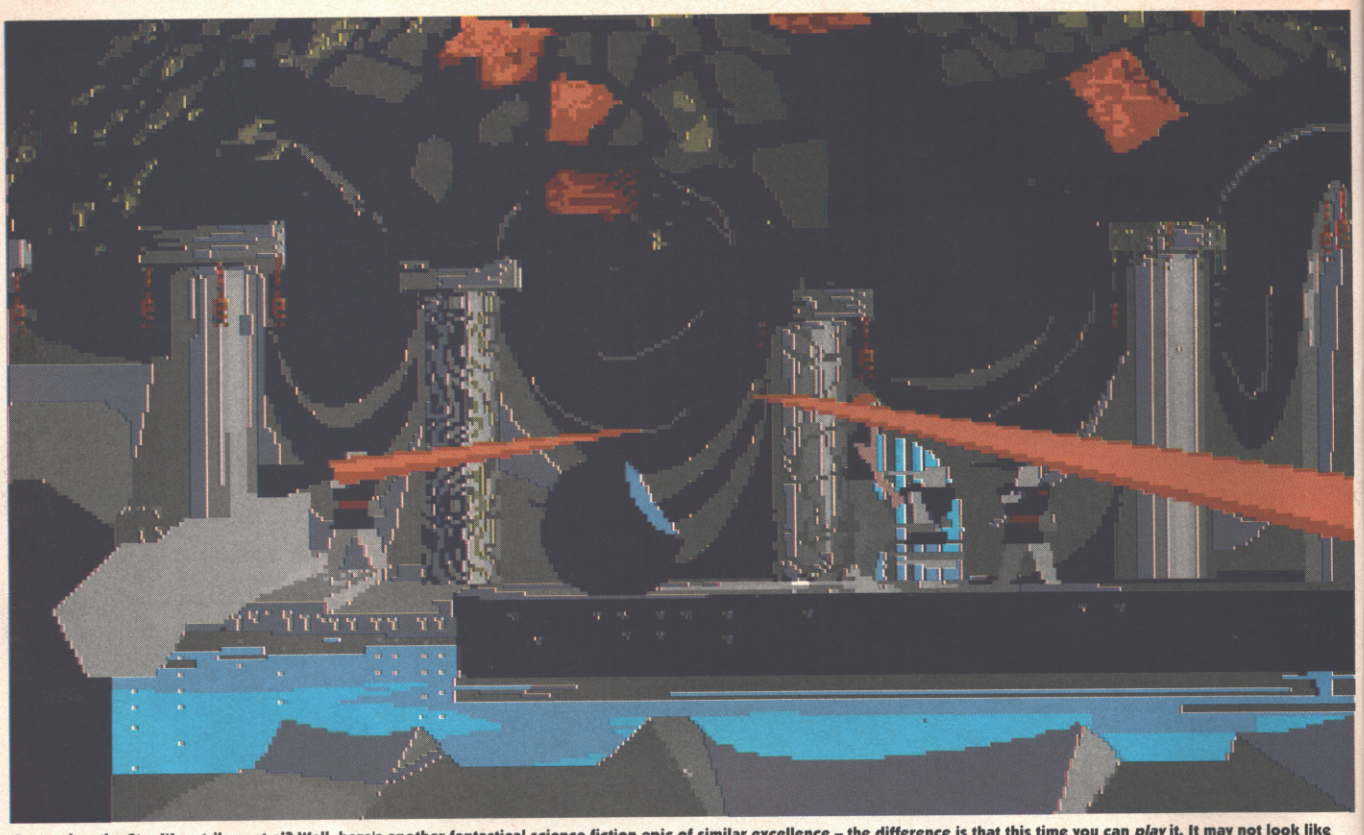
OVERALL
Switchblade II 30 ***Wolfchild*** 20

UPPERS It looks good when it isn't moving around too much, and the gameplay's in a tried-and-trusted style which anyone can get some enjoyment out of. The wolf-transformation sound is great.

DOWNERS Very derivative of *Switchblade*, movement of both characters and scrolling is a bit on the crude side, it's too easy, there's lots of annoying invisible danger, but most importantly it just lacks any kind of spark. You've seen everything here done better elsewhere.

THE BOTTOM LION
(*You're definitely fired -Ed*) Initially quite good fun, but I was completely bored with it (and more than halfway through it) in less than an hour. *Switchblade* meets *Strider*, but they don't get along too well and *Wolfchild* is the rather half-hearted end result

58 PERCENT

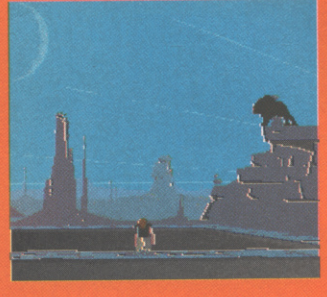


Remember the Star Wars trilogy et al? Well, here's another fantastical science fiction epic of similar excellence – the difference is that this time you can *play* it. It may not look like one, but at heart this is a platform arcade adventure – it just happens to be the most spectacular one we've ever seen. Though we hate to say it, it really is *Another World* entirely...

ANOTHER

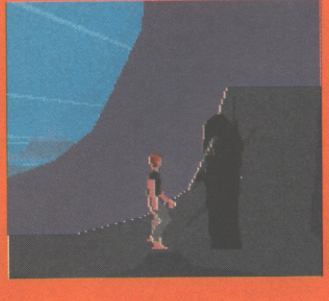
Delphine, the premier French developers, have applied their cinematic style to the

THAT'S GREAT, IT STARTS WITH AN EARTHQUAKE, BIRDS A



Climbing out of the water at the start of the game we get our first glimpse of this strange new world. Above us, a lion-like creature looks on. Nice kitty, good kitty...

Erm, help? I've got a horrible, horrible feeling my adventure could be over before it's even begun...



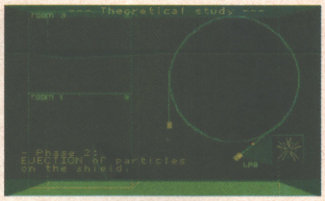
But what's this? A mysterious cloaked figure saves our hero's skin with a single well-placed laser blast. (Is that you, Obi-Wan? Nice to see you here...)

...Erm, or maybe not. Seems like my new-found 'friend' has seen fit to lock me up in a cage with this funny looking grey chap. (Wonder what he's done?)

The rather glorious intro sequence. First our hero skids to a halt outside his lab, looking very cool in a sleek Ferrari.

Then it's into the complex, where we get our first glimpse of the good guy (ie us). Hmm, the artist isn't best at people, is he?

Sitting at the central computer, the CPU is activated. As you can see, groovy 3D screens are the norm in the future.



Here's an on-screen simulation of the nuclear experiment that's about to take place. Let's hope nothing goes wrong...

Game: Another World
Publisher: US Gold
Author: Eric Chahi
Price: £25.99
Release: Out now

The French have long been the butt of computer game jokes, what with their bizarre puzzle games, garish colour schemes, and appallingly translated manuals. But our friends across the Channel need worry no longer. If Delphine's *Cruise For A Corpse* didn't set the record straight, then *Another World* certainly will.

Another World is an arcade-based adventure game, but it's one with ideas far above its station. The programmer has sought to offer a playable movie – or cartoon, if you're being pedantic – and the result, if not quite up to the (overly) ambitious grand design, is certainly a leap in the right direction. We can only hope that many of the ideas spawned in *Another World* will inspire other programmers to take further steps toward combining real arcade playability with cinema-like direction and dynamics.

I guess what *Another World* really offers is what Cinemaware were claiming to have all those years ago when *Defender Of The Crown* first appeared – a fully interactive movie. Now, I'm not naive enough to expect anything other than a pretty linear plotline here (even the mighty *Monkey Island* is surprisingly free of real player freedom – there's freedom of movement, but plot advancement requires things to be done a certain way), but that aside, this works very well as a piece of interactive storytelling. What *Another World* lacks in player freedom it more than makes up for in sass, class and sheer vision. There's not another game I can think of which shows anything like comparable attention to detail. You get the impression that everything has been fully thought through, and sadly that's quite a rare thing.

So how does it all actually work? Well, although the finished result comes across as very much its own game, its easy to see where programmer Eric Chahi took his influences. The platform-ish running, jumping and combat elements can be traced to *Prince Of Persia*, or even as far back as *Impossible Mission*, while even the distinctive visual look (majoring on the remarkable animation and range of moves available to the main character) is similarly echoed in *Persia*.

The thing is, *Another World* doesn't stop there. Added to the stew are graphics routines and pieces of finery which mirror those used in *Cruise For A Corpse*. Nowhere is this stronger than the lengthy intro sequence (those typically stylish French graphics; the way the hero walks right into, and then away from, the 'camera'). It's all strangely reminiscent of modern Japanese cartoons (Battle Of The Planets, Akira, whatever the latest one is). This isn't top quality animation by their standards, but for the Amiga to pull off anything remotely similar is quite a feat.

"A brave experiment...the game points the way forward"

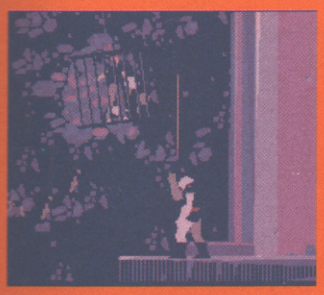
OFF THE EDGE OF THE WORLD

But where *Another World* really gets interesting is when these little graphic interludes are dropped into the main game. Walk to a window, and the scene cuts to a spectacular view of the alien planet. Pick up a pistol from the floor, and the view cuts to a glorious close-up of the gun, which our hero then reaches toward and picks up right before the player's eyes. These are things which, although in many ways entirely irrelevant to the workings of the game, help →

WORLD

platform genre, and heaven help us, it works! A new generation starts here...

AND SNAKES AND AEROPLANES (WELL, MAYBE), IT'S...



Alright, don't get cagey! If I just swing this trap back and forth enough it might drop down off that very weak rope and kill the guard below. Here goes nothing...

Now we're cooking! I'll just pick up this groovy multi-purpose laser gun thingy the squished guard dropped. Nothing can stop me now..!

And look, my grey pal's still with me. Here we are, having made our way to the top of the alien complex. Wonder what the weather's like outside..?

Wow, nice panoramic view. It's just a pity that there're bars between us and the outside world, that's all. Somehow I thought escape was a bit *too* easy...

Our hero is punched out by one of the evil big guys. What fate awaits?

Hm. Looks like he means to hang me up to dry. (Odd bunch, these grey chaps).

A quick kick and the bad guy's down. Time to make a dash for the gun...

Roll, grab, dodge, roll and dodge some more (this bloke just won't give up) and with a bit of luck I'll blast him...

...into a shower of sparks. The bad guys don't so much bite the dust as become a neat little pile of it. (Now what do I do?)

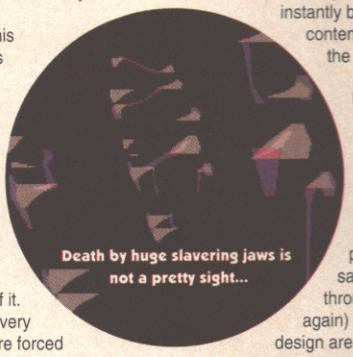
make it something very special indeed.

Imagine what sort of things might happen if other software designers picked up on this idea... What if, for instance, Psygnosis made sequences of a similar quality to their famous pre-game intros an integral part of the game design? (Okay, so in many cases it's probably going to take a medium such as CD to hold the amount of data required, but the potential is quite literally astounding...)

MORE SEASONS IN THE ABYSS

But back to the game in hand... and what a game it is. From the off, *Another World* really does try to live up to its title, providing a vision of an unknown planet looking pretty (but unsettling) from the word go. Having been transported to this strange netherworld through some million-to-one side effect of a doomed nuclear experiment, our hero materialises in a bottomless lake, prey to lethal tentacles that rise up from the deep. From here his fortunes go from bad to worse, as flesh-eating mammals and poisonous slug things hinder progress, and a very nasty (and very, very armed) bunch of aliens attempt to imprison, beat and/or kill our hero.

This action is achieved using a fairly formulaic platform-based exploration romp as the basis for things, but with the addition of a number of graphical set-pieces that make the urge to see what's around the next corner all-consuming. Squish all the slug creatures near the start of the game, for instance, and the player is faced with a huge lion-like creature. Run from this, and leap for a vine, and the vine breaks. Land back on the ground and run from the lion creature and two aliens appear, saving you from its jaws. Safety, you think. Or maybe not – the aliens shoot you, and you regain consciousness only to find yourself trapped in a cage with another creature. And so it goes on. The events, plot twists and logical progression of everything could almost form the storyboard for an action film, and how many games it is possible to say that about?



Death by huge slavering jaws is not a pretty sight...

Of course, all this detail and ambition is going to create problems, and there are two real downsides to the whole thing. The first is the game size. Due to the complexity of the action and detail of the locations there just isn't that much of it. Couple that with the very controlled route you're forced to take through the game, and you start to think *Another World* doesn't actually give you all that much game for your money. It's fun while it lasts, sure, but you're going to get a lot more playing time from a whole range of rivals.

But there're so many plus points. The intuitiveness of the controls is quite remarkable, to the point where it's harder to explain how to perform a manoeuvre than it is to simply do it. Any game which sees the player get punched to the floor (his gun skidding out across the room as he falls) then picked up by a huge alien (all animated brilliantly, with appropriately sickening smacking noises) is to be applauded. And when that game then lets the player kick the monster where it hurts, drop to the floor, run across the room, roll to the ground grabbing the gun as he rolls, turn and shoot the alien in its tracks – without having to consciously remember how to do any of it – and well, it instantly becomes a contender for game of the year.

And yet, *Another World* is something of a frustrating experience. On one hand the irritatingly death-happy controls (I'm just glad there's a password system to save trudging right through the entire game again) and limited game design are real downers, but on the other there's the sheer scope and ambition of the whole thing to think of. To take part in something so visually exciting is too precious to let some unfortunate mistakes spoil. It's a brave experiment, and while not entirely successful, it's close enough to provide an almost unbearable tease about the sort of thing we can expect to see in the future. This game points the way forward, and we can't ask for much more than that.

● *MARK RAMSHAW*

Clint Eastwood, eat your heart out. *Another World* offers shoot outs, fire fights and acrobatics by the score. (Sometimes its better to run though).

Hey, this is just like taking part in one of those disaster movies from the '70s! Forget about learning to swim at this point, young man – just leg it!

UPPERS Near perfect graphics (it's the animation and stylised approach that do it) are combined with wonderfully appropriate sound effects, and some truly breathtaking setpieces. Despite obvious reference points (*Impossible Mission*, *Prince Of Persia*, *Cruise For A Corpse*), *Another World* is one of a kind. Let's hope that doesn't remain true for too long.

DOWNERS The frustration level rises to health-risk level at times, and once its been played through to the finish, that's yer lot – end of gameplay. It's arguable that behind some very clever programming and design there's little real game.

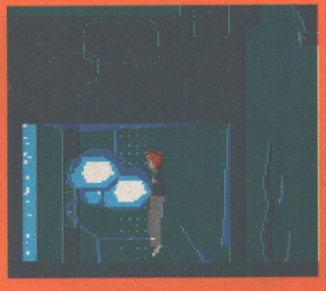
THE BOTTOM LINE

Perhaps not the true classic it should be due to its small number of locations and occasional lack of playability, but it's still a game destined to become a landmark. I can't wait to see what's next!

89 PERCENT

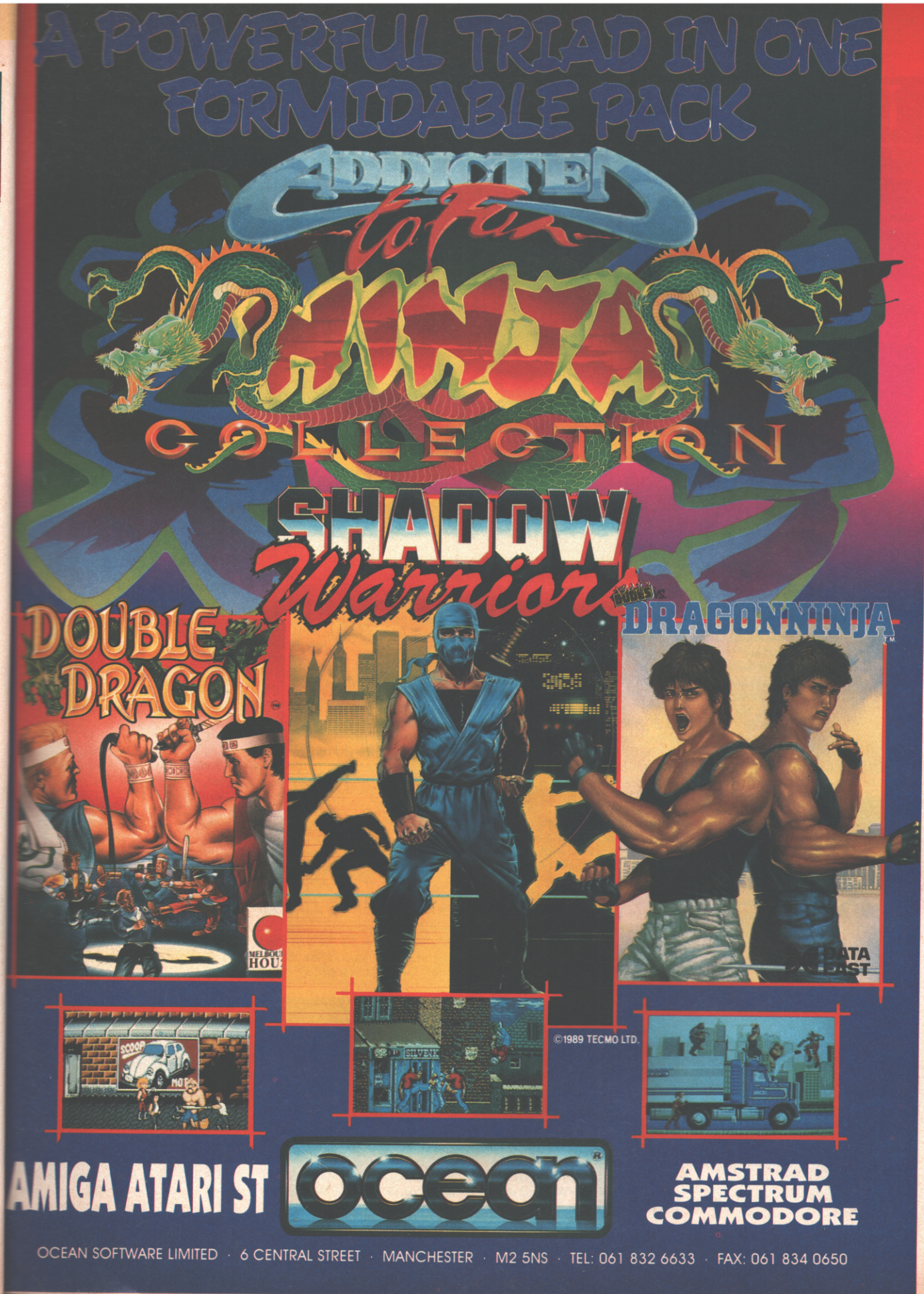
...THE END OF THE WORLD AS WE KNOW IT

Oh dear. Here, right on cue, comes trouble from stage left. I just hope my big pal has some ideas about how to deal with it – we're in big trubs otherwise.



Aha! So we should go up through the air vent should we? Having made a timely exit, I recharge the pistol and re-style my hair – the static electric shock way.

We're into the great wide open! Safe from the alien in the foreground, our rebel without a clue sets off in search of... what? *Another World* is beginning...


A POWERFUL TRIAD IN ONE FORMIDABLE PACK
ADDICTED to Fun
NINJA
COLLECTION
SHADOW Warriors
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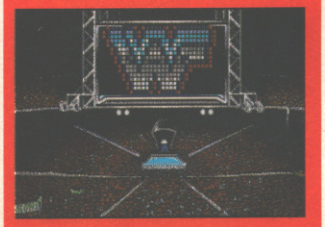
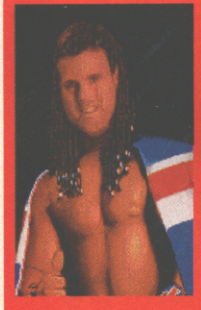
THEY LIVE!

A poorly-drawn picture of a packed arena sets the scene for the shape of things to come. The animated credits sequence which takes place on the display screen in the centre is one of the most impressive aspects of this incarnation of WWF...

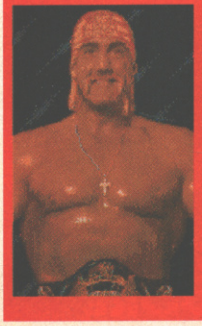


Which Good wrestler shall we play? The Hulkster's everyone's favourite grappler, but he's not the only meathead on offer. Oh no...

Ultimate Warrior is the only good guy sad enough to use face paint, but his special move, the gorilla press, is a sight to behold.



British Bulldog may not actually be much of a Bulldog, but at least he's British, and the crowds like him, and he does a nice power slam.



Here's Hulk Hogan – Suburban Commando and all round (slightly balding) good guy. Just watch him use that special pile driver move!

WWF is a sport packed with intense physical violence and

WWF WRESTLEMANIA

Game: WWF Wrestlemania
Publisher: Ocean
Author: Twilight
Price: £24.99
Release: Out now

Wrestling sure has come a long way since those Saturday afternoon shows of the '70s and '80s when such blobs of lard as Big Daddy ('ray!) and Giant Haystacks (boo!) ruled the ring. For some reason I used to believe in it all in those days – I can remember the thrill of seeing Kendo Nagasaki unmasked – which is hard to credit now. Maybe we were all just more innocent back then.

Nowadays, wrestling has an unabashed emphasis on the act. It's more soap opera than sport, with the players embroiled in battles much like the cast of 'Enders or Brooky. And it's all American – grappling in the UK was all but postponed indefinitely many years ago due to lack of interest.

There are two main wrestling bodies in the US – World Championship Wrestling and the World Wrestling Federation. The WCW can be seen on (very) early morning English telly and is for tinkers, whereas the WWF resides on the lofty heights of satellite television and appeals to more middle-class tastes.

What it doesn't appeal to is me (at all), but that's beside the point. For the benefit of myself, and any other blinkered souls in the same boat, I thought I'd find out a bit about the WWF. Here are my findings (and don't worry if you think I'm going on a bit. There's a point to all this. Trust me).

WHAT WRESTLING FEDERATION?

Every WWF performance seems to concern four major players – Good Wrestlers, Bad Wrestlers, Managers and Commentators – and all of them get actively involved in the proceedings. What a pity only eight of the dozens of colourful wrestling characters available get to perform in the Amiga version of the game – and only three of those are open to control by the player.

THE WRESTLERS

Every wrestler in WWF has a distinguishing look, name, special move and catchphrase – and even a tune to suit their theme – though you won't come across many of them here. The Good guys featured in Ocean's *Wrestlemania* are the slack-jowled British Bulldog (who hails from Leeds no less) and the over-made-up Ultimate Warrior, who looks like a Kiss fan to me. Hulk Hogan, however, is the best wrestler in the world and everyone loves him, bless his slappy scalp. Hulk (or Hulkster as he's often known) always tears his shirt off. But what's this? The Hulk's likely to retire in light of his successful transference of his acting talent from the canvas to the silver screen? WWF won't be the same again.

"The game misses the point of WWF"

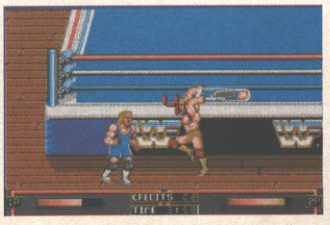
The Bad contenders are Mr Perfect (who's also retiring apparently), The Warlord, Million Dollar Man, The Mountie and Sergeant Slaughter. So what's the goss?

Well, Ted Dibiaci – aka Million Dollar Man – used to have a bodyguard called Virgil whom he continually humiliated... until Virgil snapped and scrapped with him and won. The Million Dollar Man is managed by Sensational Cheri, who removes the wads of cash stuffed into the loser's mouth by the Man.

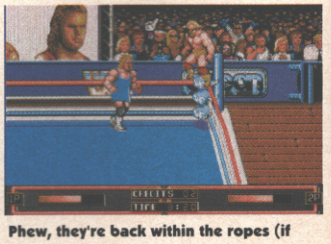
Sergeant Slaughter's actually Good at the moment, although in real life (and for the purposes of this game) he used to be Very Bad. Did you know he burned the American flag on stage during the Iraqi war? I ask you, what's the world of wrestling coming to? Sergeant Slaughter used to have two (Bad) cohorts who sadly don't appear in Ocean's *WWF Wrestlemania*: General Adnan and Colonel Mustafa. Both of them, like their boss, wore military uniforms, but with those boots with the curly-up toes.

The Mountie dresses as you'd expect, but what you might not guess is that he also wields an electric cattle prod. He often trades words with the Big Boss Man (Good), who doesn't appear here but comes from Cop County, Georgia and wears the uniform to prove it. Big Boss Man's 'thing' is to handcuff losers to the ropes. The two 'law enforcers' recently settled their differences once and for all in the Jailhouse Match – the loser spending a night in jail. The Mountie lost.

Dong! Dong! With the clunk of what sounds like a cow bell, the bout begins. The rules are simple: pin the other guy to the floor for a count of three and win – if it's within the five-minute time limit.



The slapping, drop-kicking and grappling continues – even outside the ring. Here Hulkster's armed with a chair, but he hasn't long to use it – the clock starts ticking when either guy leaves the ring.



Phew, they're back within the rules (if they stay outside too long the match get's declared void – which basically amounts to a loss for the human player). Here Hulk tries a flying leap from a corner post...

vicious insults (and that's just the crowd). So why is the game so bloody weedy?

THE ABSENT FRIENDS OF WWF

But what of the other entertainers not present in *Wrestlemania*? Some of the more savoury ones who should have made it but didn't include the Undertaker (Bad) whose repertoire includes the Tombstone (the opponent is dropped head-first onto the canvas) and putting losers into bodybags. His theme tune is the funeral march.

IRS (Bad) – aka Irwin R Shyster – might have been a good choice too. He reckons that everyone in the WWF is a tax cheat so he's out to make sure they pay – his losers are served with tax demands.

Greg 'The Hammer' Valentine doesn't wield a hammer – but he does shout "It's hammer time!". The very large Andre The Giant is now retired. (His bulk featured in Rob Reiner's film The Princess Bride).

The most evil man in WWF has to be Jake 'The Snake' Roberts (Bad). Jake's trademark is a snake in a bag which is released to wave in the face of the loser. (He used to have a snake called Damien, but that got sat on by a fat wrestler called Earthquake (Bad) and is no more). It transpired that Jake was actually in collusion with the Undertaker all along. Earthquake is now part of a duo with Tornado (nee Tugboat) called the Natural Disasters.

And there are plenty more...

THOSE COMMENTATORS IN FULL

Most of them are former wrestlers, such as Gorilla Monsoon, Rowdy Roddy Piper (he played the lead role in John Carpenter's flick They Live!) and part-timer MachoMan. Bobby 'The Brain' Heenan used to manage Mr Perfect and The Barbarian before he took up commentating. Now Bob's back with Rick Flare – aka Nature Boy – who was recently promoted from the WCW and purports to be the real world champion following three months of intense build up. Rick's all sparkly teeth and cape and a blonde Playdo Fuzzy Pumper moulded hair-do.

The WWF comprises many special events, such as Wrestlemania (the main tournament), Summerslam (which is much the same as Wrestlemania), Survivor Series (teams of Good take on teams of Bad), Royal Rumble (an event for individuals which always ends up with everyone in the ring at the same time) and UK Rampage (they come over here and do it all for us).

There are four main titles to hold. The most important is the World Championship (which Hulk recently regained from the Undertaker having held it for many years beforehand). Then there's the Intercontinental Championship (which Mr Perfect lost to Bret 'The Hitman' Heart), The Million Dollar Belt and The TagTeam Championship, currently held by the Legion Of Doom.

SO WHAT'S THE POINT EXACTLY, GARY?

The point is this – with the WWF licence there's such a wide range of colourful, larger than life characters and events available to chose from that it's almost criminal how little they've done with it. As you will now have guessed from the title, Ocean's *WWF Wrestlemania* concerns only one of these many variations on the wrestling theme. In fact, the most exciting thing about the whole package is the video cassette you'll find floating around in the box. This is only 15 minutes long, and consists of (by and large) very brief highlights of WWF days gone by, so it gives you some indication as to the level of thrills generated by the actual game that it should prove to be the highlight of the whole pack!

"It fails to make the grade on any worthwhile level"

There's a pitiful attempt at pre-match patter (more should have been made of this), mucho disk swapping, but precious little to do. But, try as I might, I can't derive any enjoyment from performing limited joystick movements from an inflexible selection. A typical bout tends to consist of tedious grappling and frustrating attempts at finding the correct position required to pin your opponent to the floor.

The wrestlers loom large on the screen, sure, but their movements are poor and they seem to float around the ring as they murmur "Uh" and "Ooh". The crowd – on the few occasions they make themselves known – sound like a high-speed jet. (At least the canvas slapping sound carries some weight).

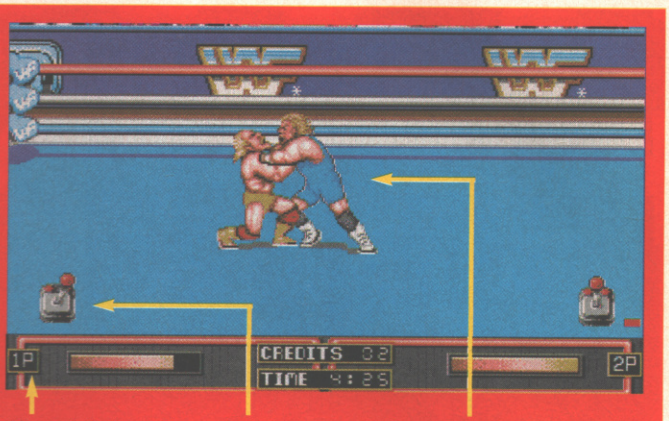
That it fails as a pure simulation of traditional wrestling (which it does with great aplomb) isn't as much of a problem in my book as that it so clearly misses the whole larger-than-life point of the WWF. When it comes to creating a loud and proud rucking romp you couldn't wish for a healthier source of raw material, but *WWF Wrestlemania* fails to make the grade on any worthwhile level. It's simply not fun – or funny – and that's what the Real Thing's all about. The biggest surprise is that *WWF Wrestlemania* lacks any of the event's camp OTT splendour (when a match begins or comes to an end there's little or no celebration, for instance). There should be more pace. More poncing about. More posing. More pomp. Basically more of what you watch WWF for.

● *GARY PENN*

GRUNT AND GRAPPLE

The battle between Hulk Hogan and Mr Perfect continues...

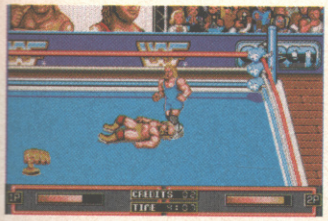
Each wrestler's strength is represented by a bar in the panel at the bottom of the screen. A wrestler without any strength can still wrestle, but his resilience to physical pressure is zilch. Meanwhile, back at the bout, Mr Perfect's got our Hulkster in a hold. This is it, grapple fans! The GrappleStrength-o-meters have appeared at the bottom of the screen and the first wrestler to take it to the max wins the tussle and gets to perform his special move on the loser. Rapid (and rapidly painful) movements of the joystick shaft from left to right, otherwise known as waggling, is the order of the day here.



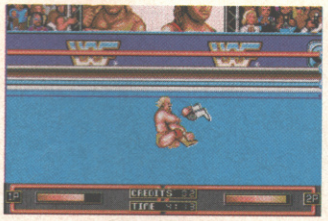
This panel displays both players' energy, with the credits remaining and time left displayed in the centre.

Each player gets one of these grapple icons when the two big guys grab each other. As the sticks are waggled, the icon animates appropriately.

Hulk goes weak at the knees, as Mr Perfect's armpits begin to overpower the good guy. Only some speedy joystick work can save the day now...



Mr Perfect makes a recovery and turns the tables to send Hulkster tumbling to the canvas. That yellow finger icon shows that rapid presses of the joystick firebutton are required to get Hulkster on his feet – not an easy task when strength is low.



Pass the Anadin... Mr Perfect feels the might of Hulkster's special move – a head-crunching Pile Driver. Ouch!

Mr Perfect's down but not out. Hulkster takes advantage of his weakness and pins him to the canvas. The count begins... Will Perfect have the strength to throw the Hulkster off? We say no – the next wrestler had better start saying his prayers!

UPPERS I'm sorry to say there aren't many. It's aesthetically quite average really. Still, there is a video cassette to watch in the box.

DOWNERS There are plenty, but the biggest failings are the complete absence of WWF's sparkle and the sorry lack of any fluid, stimulating grappling action either.

THE BOTTOM LINE

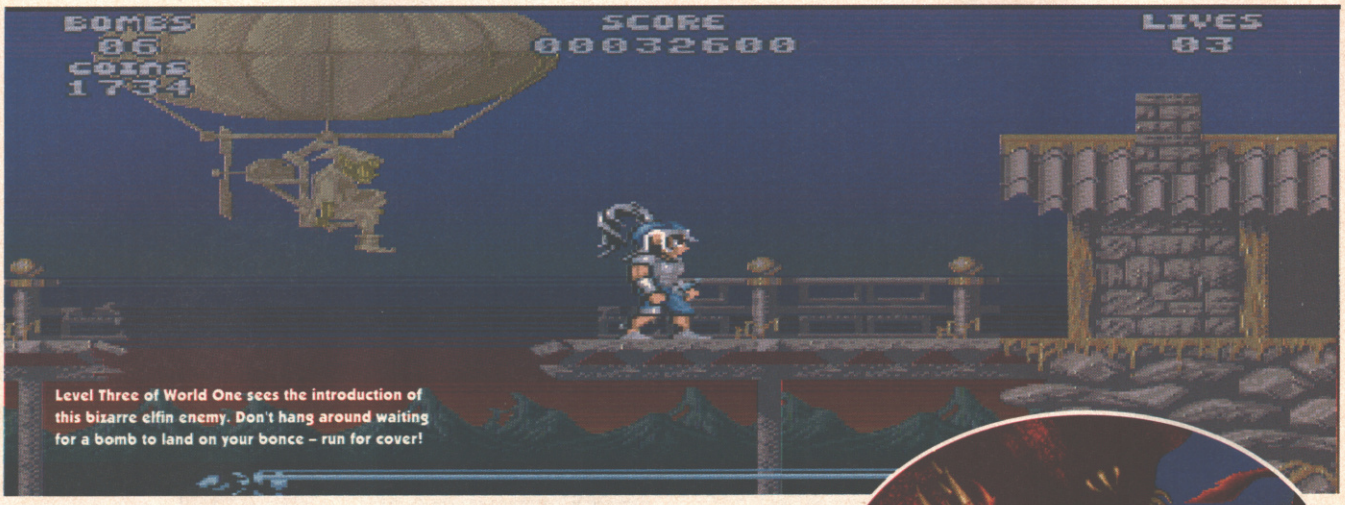
An unexciting simulation of what is widely considered a thrilling event. There's disappointment in store for grapple fans and WWF watchers alike. Come back Big Daddy, all is forgiven.

39 PERCENT

34

The avalanche of Psygnosis releases continues with an arcade platformer free of

LEANDER



Level Three of World One sees the introduction of this bizarre elfin enemy. Don't hang around waiting for a bomb to land on your bonce – run for cover!

Game: Leander
Publisher: Psygnosis
Price: £25.99
Authors: Andy Ingram and Jon Burton (programming, design, graphics), Simon James (additional graphics)
Release: Out now

Greetings, my excellent friends. Welcome to our 'Oh no! More Japanese-style Platform Games' slot. This month we're discussing Psygnosis' latest stab at bolting a game onto one of their crowd-pleasing parallax scrolling routines, *Leander*. Another meaningless title, more nice parallax, but – hey! what's this? – there's actually an excellent game lurking beneath the dreaded two layer scrolling! What's going on?

Actually, it's nothing too out of the ordinary. In style and execution *Leander*'s not really a great deal different to the bulk of Psygnosis releases over the past twelve months. There is still a dearth of new ideas or originality here, but happily things simply hang together more happily than usual. Redeeming features abound – particularly in the areas of attention to detail and obviously player-orientated design (I know it sounds obvious, but you'd be surprised) – which carry *Leander* through.

RELATIVITY AND ART OF STYLE

If *Leander* has a cousin on the Amiga, then it has to be *Switchblade 2*, so that's where we'll stop for our first comparision. Both games give the first impression of being slick – but ultimately rather tired – efforts which sacrifice the fires of originality and enthusiasm for a sanitised Mega Drive-esque degree of professionalism. And yet, given enough time to prove themselves, both games actually manage to confound these impressions.

Reaching further afield in the *Leander* family tree, if *Leander* has a half-cousin once removed then it has to be *Sonic The Hedgehog* on the Mega Drive. Although less obviously styled on Sega's spikey mascot than *Robocod*, say, it shares a number of visual reference points (the swinging platforms, butter-smooth movement, and that undefinable 'vibe', for want of a better word). This isn't a complaint at all – *Sonic* is top game, and no mistake – and as it looks unlikely to ever grace the Amiga, I've got no problems with other games borrowing little elements here and there. If the professional sheen of *Sonic* inspires other programmers to emulate the glitch-free console style, it would be churlish to complain. Which brings me to the part of the review where I actually describe what the hell happens in the game. (To be honest, I could do this in one sentence – walk, jump, slice, collect, go to exit, go to next level – but I'd probably get sacked, so let's get a bit more detailed).

"It wouldn't be a Psygnosis game without a shop"

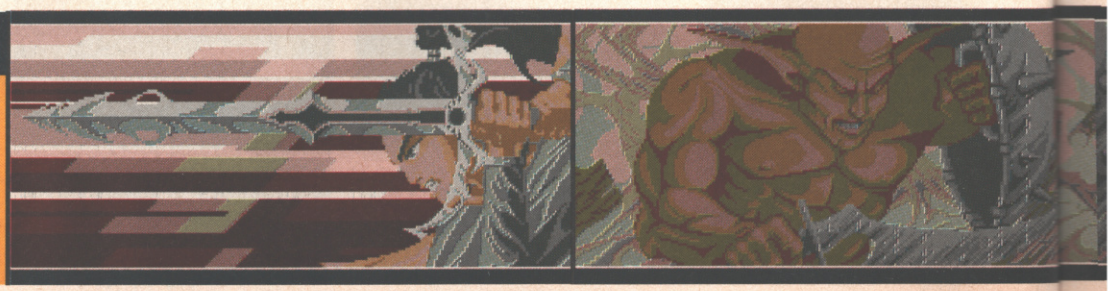
Controlling a cute little sprite – something like a medieval knight crossed with Barbie doll, despite the Japanese styling of the packaging – the action takes place over several worlds, each with a number of levels. An intro screen precedes each level, with a cute babe giving some simple directions on how to complete the set tasks, and so advance to the next one. These are pretty simple affairs, usually along the lines of finding a crown or some such at one end of the play area, then making your danger-filled way to the glowing exit door at the other. Straightforward, huh?

Well, there are complications (just

STICKING THE KNIFE IN

That suitably dynamic intro sequence thingie in full.

Our hero storms towards his foe, speed blurs, erm, blurring, his sword at the ready. Clash! Blade meets shield! And, er, that's it basically. Oh well.



ree of

any original features whatsoever. So how, then, is it that it's so darned playable?

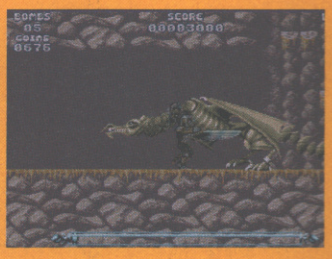
SCENES FROM THE CLASS STRUGGLE IN LEVELS AND HILLS

Leander is a whole new world. Well, it's actually whole new worlds. And within the worlds, what should we find but levels? And more levels after that. (Blimey, eh?)

Each one follows a recognisable style, but the problems become more devious, the landscape more complex, and the nasties that bit nastier as you progress. Here's just a taster of world one...

This is the very first screen of *Leander*. A wooden chest slides left and right to the east, while the very first bad guy lurks to the west. Having already been told that the treasure lies west, I guess it's time to leap into the arms of evil. (Don't forget to swing that sword!)

Having collected the treasure on level two, our hero journeys into the spooky caves, and what should he find, but the exit to the next level? Simply walk inside to get transported to the next level, while the world shakes, rattles, and rolls all around.



Lovely graphics ahoy! The dragon may not be very dynamic (his movement is limited to waddling back and forth, and sticking his neck out) but he sure looks handsome. A few swift swipes with a trusty sword are enough to make him disappear in a (ahem) puff of smoke.

By level four the map gets a little more complex, the balloon guys appear, and the caves become sheer hell. Platforms swing precariously above spike pits, plants send deadly spores flying all over the place, and our hero is faced with more evil knights than ever.

like in The Young Doctors). Finding the object in question isn't always quite so simple as it sounds – in addition to the fact that there are usually several dozen wooden chests lurking around (mm, I wonder which one the treasure is in?), the landscape is potted with caves, evil spikes, and the inevitable motley collection of sword-wielding nasties. Subsequent levels add titbits like horse-drawn carts (jump on them as a useful way to reach higher ledges), airborne elves (with a sizeable collection of bombs) and – hey! – it wouldn't be a Pysgnosis game without a shop. It's here that all the coins gleaned from chests and dead nasties can be used, equipping our hero with better armour, a better sword, throwing daggers, and several groovy magic items.

"An excellent game beneath the parallax"

So far, so typical. So where does that leave us? Well, the proof of the pudding (as Stuart Campbell's granny used to say) is in the eating, and, boy, does *Leander* taste good. It may be lacking in original ideas, and the graphics may be be styled just like every other Psygnosis scroller you've ever seen, but there's thought behind the layout of platforms, minor puzzles to solve, and caves to negotiate. Perhaps the secret of *Leander*'s success lies in the unadulterated slickness of everything. Arcade (or at least console) quality in every aspect, it's the carefully developed little details which add up to a satisfying jump and slash adventure. The way, for instance, that the main sprite has a small amount of inertia which has to be taken into account when running and jumping (or negated by tapping the joystick); the ability to define the number of credits, lives, and access codes for later worlds; the sheer rightness of it all – these are a few of my favourite things.

Against all odds, *Leander* has managed to win itself a place in my heart. Whatever its faults it offers a decent amount of top platform action.

● *MARK RAMSHAW*

Well, this *is* a Psygnosis game. Here we are about to enter the shop sequence – it might not look all that big from the outside, but step inside...

...and it takes us to this screen. This cute Japanese-ish babe sells some pretty tasty items for not too pricey prices either. What a jolly nice girl.

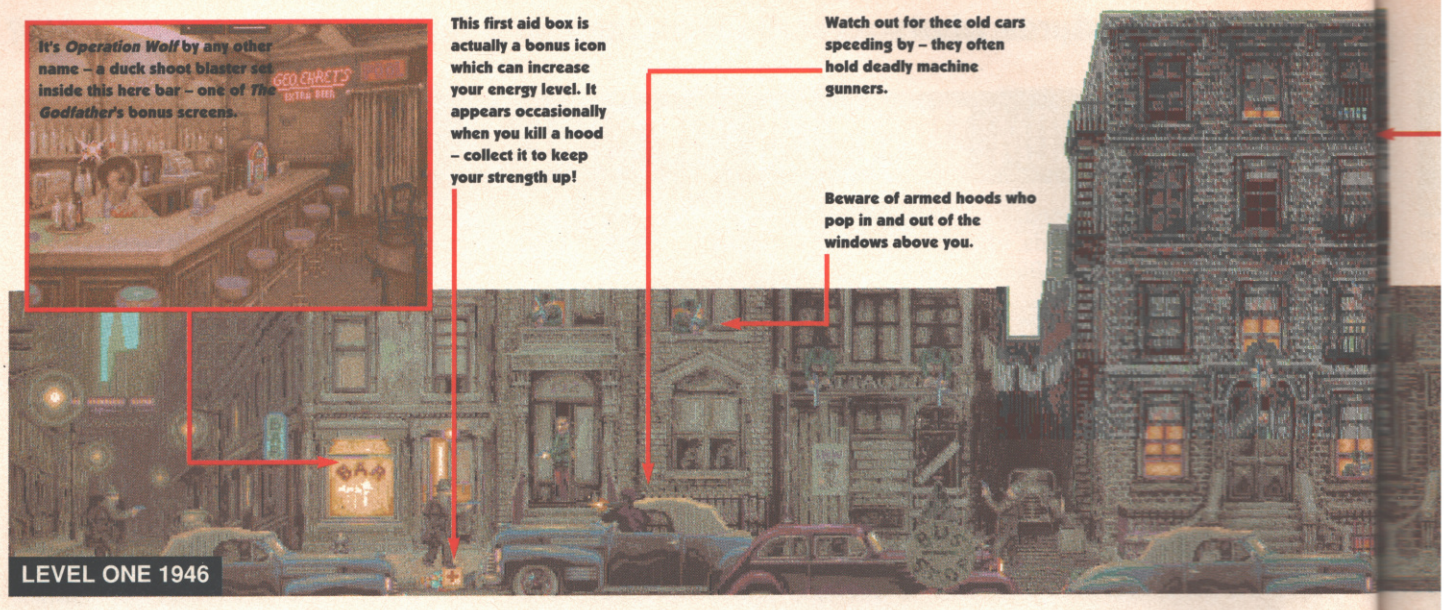
UPPERS Slice after mouth-watering slice of smooth, creamy console-esque platform action. The standard Psygnosis style has never looked or worked better. A sizeable and endearing exercise in coolness.

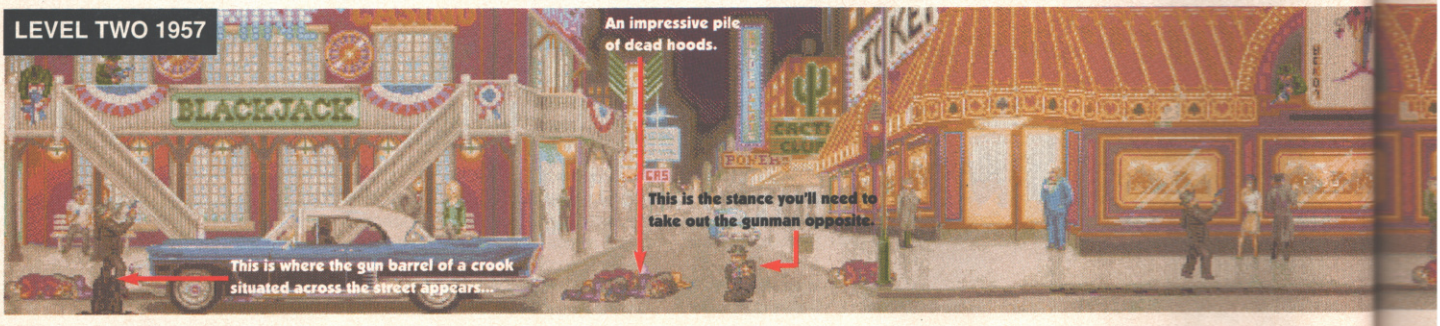
DOWNERS Shallow as hell, and if there's a single feature in here which I haven't seen elsewhere, then (um) I must have blinked and missed it. And how I hate those in-game tunes! (At least they can be swapped for some middle-of-the-road sound fx if you get really sick of them).

THE BOTTOM LINE

Though ultimately a limited romp, *Leander* nevertheless manages to offer plenty of short term fun, and what it lacks in inspiration it makes up for in perspiration. One of Psygnosis' finest recent moments, and an excellent game in its own right.

83 PERCENT





Title: The Godfather
Publisher: US Gold
Price: £30.99
Author: Creative Materials
Release: Out now

It's gorgeous, isn't it? One glance at these pages and you could almost be forgiven for thinking this is Delphine's said-to-be spectacular graphic adventure version of the Godfather licence, but no – it's US Gold's action variant, pure and simple.

Still, wow, eh? Load this up and your immediate impression is of one very classy product – the sort of game that people walking past (if your computer happens to be in the sort of place people walk past, that is), stop and stare at. Lovely, slightly blurry looking, but smooth and atmospheric tableaus that would look great if they were static, but are truly spectacular because they actually move! Cars drive up and down the streets, people walk the pavements, flags flutter, and generally the impression of life is very ably created. This would have been a knock-down dead product only last year, and even now – competing as it is with the likes of *Another World*, *Heimdall* et al – it's spectacular. If we were giving individual graphic marks – pointless things though they are (we're reviewing *games*, not graphic demos) – this would be high 80s at least.

Those who understand the structure of AMIGA POWER reviews will realise we're going to come to a very big 'but' at this point, and here it is. The big 'but' is that lovely and sexy though it may look, the gameplay is actually a tedious scrolling shoot-'em-up of sub-*NARC* standards. (Actually, thinking about it, it's perhaps more like Ocean's first *RoboCop* game, but we'll get to that in due course).

"It's painfully slow in every way"

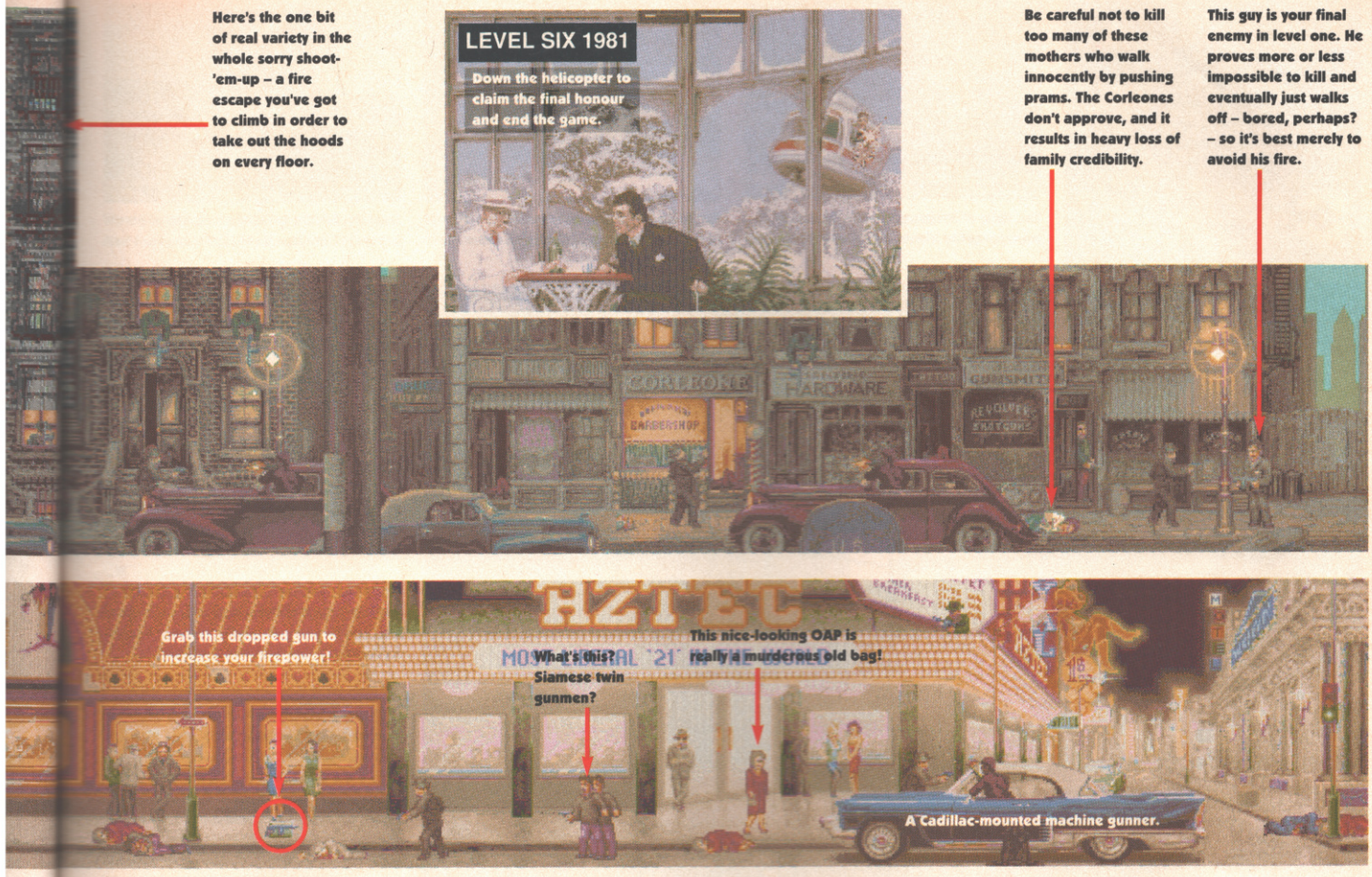
First, though, the structure of the game. You all know – at least by reputation – of the series of movies this is based on. Added together there's at least eight or nine hours of screen time, thirty major characters, three (and a half) generations and countless shootings, stabbings and other violent set pieces in the films. All a bit of a daunting task to try and fit into an action game really, which is why US Gold simply don't bother. Oh sure, we get the sense of the passage of time – levels start in the 1940s and move forward towards the present day – but individual characters, incidents and plot twists don't really come into it. You play whichever character happens to be Don Corleone (the Godfather of the clan Corleone) in each time period, on a mission to 'keep the bad guys at bay' (as the box has it). (What this presumably means is kill off the members of all rival gangs, as there's no real way *you* could be said to be on the side of the angels, but never mind...)

Following the intro – a well engineered pan shot taking you through the New York of 1946 which even Godfather director Francis Ford Coppola would approve of – you enter the grandioso world of organised crime. A spinning newspaper device headlining mob massacre tells you whether we're in 1946, 1957, 1961, 1975 or 1981 – it's neat enough, but unfortunately here's where any similarity between the game and the films effectively ends.

This isn't where disappointment sets in, however. First impressions are of a well animated, historically set game in which stylish cars zoom by and illuminated trains rattle along in the distance, while in the foreground there's you, shooting dead every crook you come across as you walk these mean streets – and these mean streets are *crawling* with hoods. Avoiding

No, no, no, no, no! Gorgeous graphics do not a good shoot-'em-up make – not on

THE GOD



policemen and mothers-with-prams is a good idea – if you shoot too many you'll be disowned by the Corleone family and lose the game, killing policemen obviously not looked upon as a Good Thing. This is very straight point-and-shoot blasting stuff, the odd fire escape to climb or *RoboCop*-style angled shot at an upstairs window being about as exciting as it gets. As in *Navy SEALs*, the characters you've shot remain lying in the places they've fallen, satisfying for the bloodthirsty, and a definite Neat Touch.

So far, so fair (but pedestrian) and, it has to be said, so hard. Not only are there your fast-falling energy and family credibility values to conserve, there're also the particularly lousy instructions to cope with. Where, for instance, does it tell you that many of the cars speeding past in the foreground of the screen contain machine gunners who'll take pot shots at you? Until you realise this, and how to defend yourself against them (crouch down and you'll fire out of the screen), you'll find your energy level dropping with seemingly reasonless rapidity.

And so it goes. Occasional single screen *Operation Wolf*-style sub levels – there are two in the first level – break up the action, but haven't we seen these before? Indeed, they're exactly the sort of keeping-the-interest-going trick used in countless Ocean film games, and they've worn a bit thin by now. The graphics may be superb, and the initial sense of atmosphere strong, but there's no way they can stand in for decent gameplay.

SO WHAT'S WRONG WITH IT?

You're in for a bit of a mighty list here, I'm afraid. The lack of imagination shown in the structuring of the game is bad enough, but the execution of the actual gameplay elements chosen is diabolical too. Disk swapping – there are six (!), and each time you lose the game you have to load in the end-of-game sequence – is a real pain too, especially as the game refuses to recognise a second disk drive.

The worst thing, though, is the pace – it's painfully slow in every way, presumably hampered by the detail of the graphics. Dodging bullets is almost an impossibility – realistic, but not good for a game – and shooting old-dears-with-prams (and thus risking family dishonour) is all too often the only way out of a tight fix. The shoot-'em-up element demands next-to-zero need for hand to eye co-ordination either – 90 percent of the basic game, as it turns out, is an attempt to get your man into a position where his upward angled gun can pick off the marksmen in the windows above. Master that, and you've mastered the game. (Not really much challenge for 30 quid).

And there's more. Though there's plenty of visual variety, the new gameplay elements later levels introduce – chiefly a gunman across the street opposite, who appears as a gun barrel at the bottom of the screen, and effectively reverses the positions of *Operation Wolf* so the player's firing out of the screen at himself – fail to add enough to keep you interested. File with either 'interesting failures' or 'more crap film licences', depending on how generous you're feeling at the time.

● *MATTHEW SQUIRES*

UPPERS Lovely to look at – a graphically superb game, with plenty of good animation and some rather lovely sound effects too. One to impress your friends with alright.

DOWNERS Oh dear, oh dear... beneath it all, it's a tedious old *RoboCop* clone – monotonous, lacking in variety, inefficiently programmed (we must only assume) and providing precious little gameplay for £30.

THE BOTTOM LINE

US Gold take the surely-very-boring-by-now Ocean approach to a film game – those nifty graphics can't fool us! Unfortunately, gametesting doesn't seem to have been a priority here – the finished result is slack and dull and lacking in challenge. Avoid.

56 PERCENT

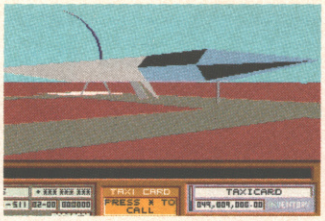
their own anyway. And these ones are particularly lonely...

FATHER

IT'S CERTAINLY BIG...

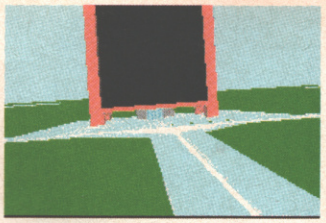
...you can't deny that. *Merc III* is one massive game – outside of *Midwinter* et al there's little to rival it.

Come with us, then, on a sight-seeing tour of the entire solar system...



The hulls of these spaceships become transparent in flight. (I'm gonna be sick).

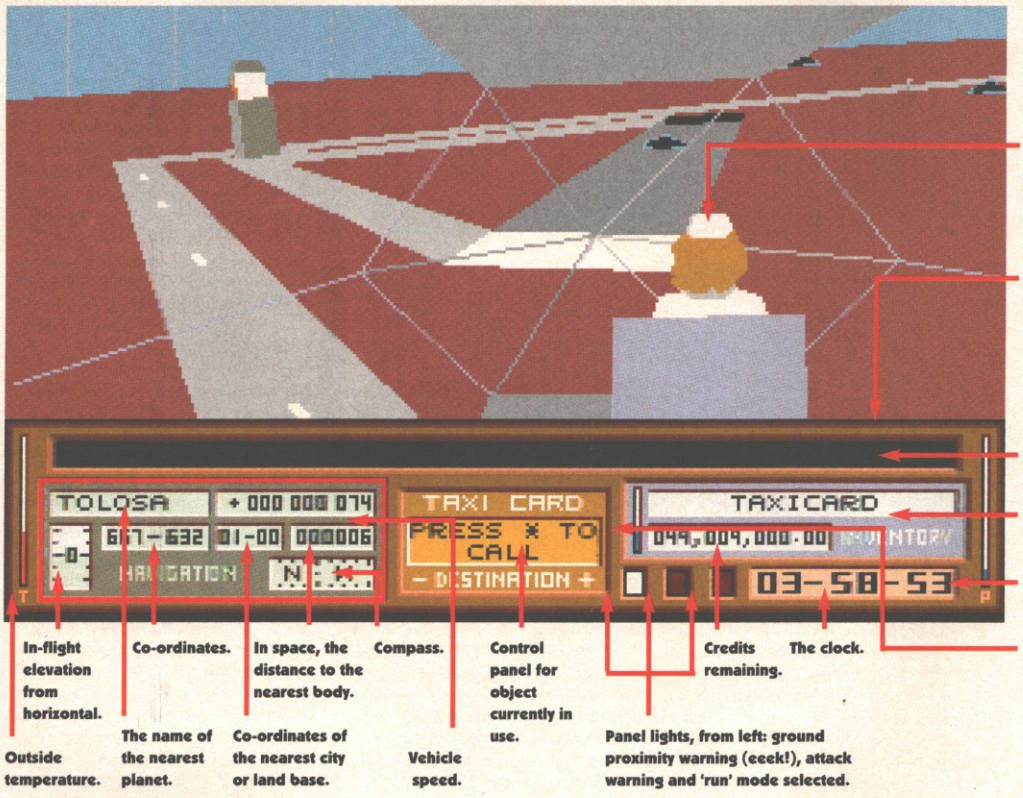
PC Bill's secretary is only one of several Lego-like characters you'll encounter.



Massive, blocky buildings rise out of otherwise unremarkable landscapes.

TRAVELLING BETWEEN PLANETS, THE MERCENARY WAY

Hang on in there folks, we're coming in to land on Tolosa – I hope that space jock knows what he's doing!



The back of the pilot's head. Best not to distract him now, unless you're a committed geologist! Still, at least he's not babbling on.

This is the 'Benson' panel. Benson is your friendly computer who tells you where you are, what's going on and even what time it is. Don't you just hate know-it-alls?

Benson's text messages to you appear right here.

Inventory selection window.

Outside pressure.

Inventory capacity available.

In-flight elevation from horizontal.

Co-ordinates.

In space, the distance to the nearest body.

Compass.

Control panel for object currently in use.

Credits remaining.

The clock.

Outside temperature.

The name of the nearest planet.

Co-ordinates of the nearest city or land base.

Vehicle speed.

Panel lights, from left: ground proximity warning (eeek!), attack warning and 'run' mode selected.

Game: Mercenary III
Publisher: Novagen
Authors: Paul Woakes
Price: £29.99
Release: Out now

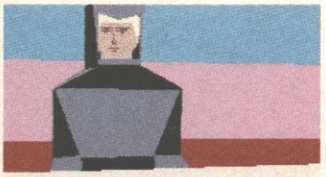
That well-worn cliché 'you'll either love it, or hate it' could well have been coined to describe the unique implementation of Novagen's *Mercenary* trilogy. What was true of the first two games (*Mercenary* and *Damocles*) is taken a stage further in this latest installment of Paul Woakes space-bound saga of political and military intrigue – *Mercenary II* looks all set to further polarize opinion.

For those unsure of what the whole *Mercenary* saga is about at all, it's your prime example of a role-playing, investigative, 3D shoot-'em-up trading game – quite enough to be going on with, I think you'll agree. The scenario is set in the Gamma solar system, in which you play a soldier of fortune with a mission to save civilisation from the designs of an aspirant despot – while at the same time making a fortune for yourself, of course. This mighty task is presented in a 'treasure hunt' fashion – it's up to you travel the system looking for clues and the materiel (yes, materiel, not materials) with which to discharge your duty. The folk you meet on your travels can offer useful information and items can be bought and traded, taking you further towards victory.

There are plenty of planets and satellites to explore and all manner of transport at your disposal, from buses and taxis to aeroplanes and spacecraft. You can hire or buy your wheels or wings and do whatever tickles your fancy, but events have a nasty way of catching up on you in this open-ended adventure.

INTO THE WIDE BLUE YONDER

As for the plot, it's a continuation of *Damocles*. Many players fell foul of that game's only fatal trap and found their characters faced with imprisonment but – banged up or not

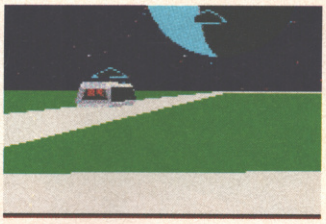


PC Bill himself – I wouldn't buy a used car off this fella, let alone vote for him!

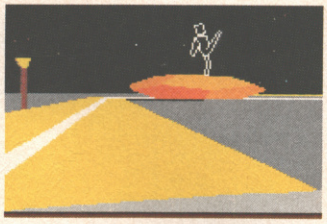
The latest slice of Paul Woakes' 3D space epic is here, and

MERCE

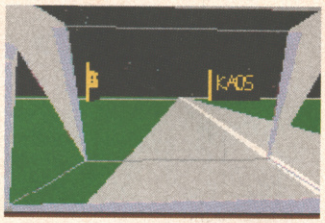
Would you believe it – Future Publishing! And look, it's our real receptionist too...



Giant crescent moons hang low in the sky over many of these fairly empty worlds...



...though occasionally you get the odd bizarre bit of architecture like this one!



Decide to run for president and the names on these billboards could be yours!

– everybody starts out with the same challenge ahead in *Mercenary III*. Time has passed in the Gamma System and the headline-grabbing character of the day is PC Bill – a rags-to-riches personality whose success in business investment during the system's earliest colonial days has proved meteoric. PC Bill is now standing for president of the entire planetary system. What's more, his candidacy is unopposed. However, you now have a chance to change all of that because somebody has just given you a Get Out Of Jail Free card – not only that, but you've received a personal invitation to meet PC Bill himself. Curiouser and (as they say) curiouser.

Imprisoned you may have been, but it seems you weren't kept completely in the dark. You're well aware of Bill's plan to mine the rural world of Dion North, a plan that's as sure to cripple that fragile world's eco-system as a delivery of Sellafield special brew. Your mission is clear – this power-hungry chappie has to be stopped, and you've been given the means to do it. Along with your freedom comes a bank balance in excess of 50 million credits – the worlds of the Gamma System are thus yours to explore (at least, until the point where your money runs out or PC Bill wins the election). And what worlds they are...

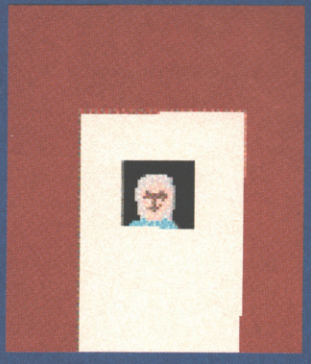
THE GRAPHICS ARE SURREAL THING

The first thing you notice is that the perspective applied to 3D objects is surreal. Buildings that look normally proportioned from a distance loom crazily in close-up and consist of massive rooms, wide and low, often with nothing in them. Most of the time, the only thing that reminds you that you're playing this on an Amiga is the finely sculpted interface panel occupying the bottom inch of the display. Benson, as the interface is called, enables you to drive or fly vehicles, examine objects you come across and record conversations with the characters you meet. Meanwhile, you develop a good case of myopic vision as you take in a game world that looks not so much as though it belongs on another planet as

FIVE DIFFERENT WAYS TO PLAY: BEATING PC BILL

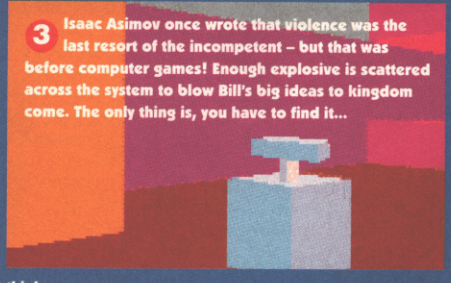
If you've been through the first two adventures in the *Mercenary* trilogy, don't read this bit. It's a round-up hints for beginners on how to complete the game. There are five ways to go about it...

1. Beat Bill at his own game.
2. Bankrupt PC Bill.
3. Blow everything up!
4. Put him in jail.
5. Shoot-'em-up!

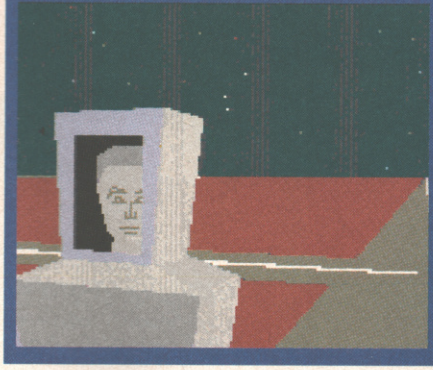


1 You too can run for election. It's a free world (just). You nominate yourself as a candidate easily enough, but how do you convert Bill's votes into yours? If you know anything about politics you'll know it takes TV companies, ad agencies and the like to get your message across. This can have some unusual results, especially when billboards with your face on start being posted on the roadsides! This approach *can* work – once you have supreme executive power, you can put the lid on Bill's anti-environmentalist activities for good. It's a bit boring though...

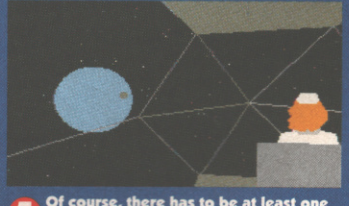
2 Among your adversary's businesses is a casino. In the casino there's both a fruit machine and a wheel of fortune. But, as any gambler knows, you can't guarantee to win unless you cheat... *Should* you clean the place out, Bill won't be able to come up with the money for all that digging equipment – JCBs don't come cheap – but be warned, this approach can easily bankrupt you if things go wrong.



3 Isaac Asimov once wrote that violence was the last resort of the incompetent – but that was before computer games! Enough explosive is scattered across the system to blow Bill's big ideas to kingdom come. The only thing is, you have to find it...



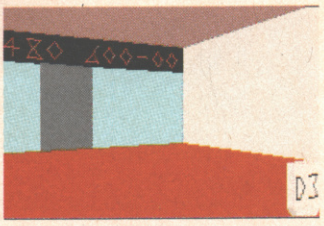
4 You don't think a guy with Bill's ambition could be honest, do you? Of course not, he's a crook. The problem is, if you're going to have him locked up, you need to find the proof. And if that isn't enough, you have to have a jail built that's strong enough to keep Bill rehabilitating. And if that isn't enough, you have to catch him yourself. Doesn't anyone else do anything around here? (Hello?)



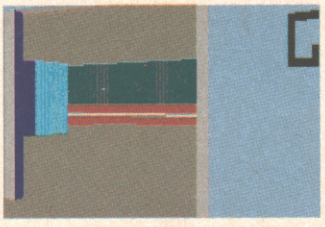
5 Of course, there has to be at least one opportunity for mega-violence, and this is it. Stellar Factors, a shipbuilding company, has just the job – a ship bristling with weaponry. It requires only one minor modification: your opponents are going to shoot back, so you need a shield!

it'll find a built-in audience. Newcomers may wonder what all the fuss is about...

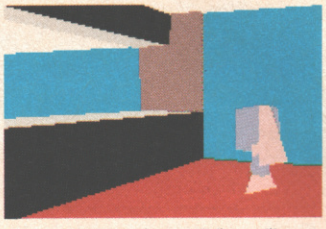
ENARY III



Trading is risky, true, but it's still a lot less of a gamble than going to the casino.



3D elevators crop up throughout the game, much like in *RoboCop III*.



Super suit, eh? Try it on. It'll fit you like, erm, a very large and lumpy glove!

Minimalist furnishings by Office Economy – there's little bric-a-brac in *Merc III*...

in a museum.

It has to be said that the characters you actually meet are pretty crude-looking too. Rather than using the tried-and-tested 'still portrait and animated mouth' representation, with the occasional blink of an eyelid thrown in for good measure, each person you come across is constructed from filled polygons. As they talk, their drawn-on mouths and eyebrows wiggle furiously, as if living in the Gamma System induces every type of nervous tic going. Is there still a case for such primitive animation and 3D execution after being treated to the likes of Activision's *Hunter*, Image Works' *The Killing Cloud*, or any of last year's flight sim releases? I don't really think so.

BACK TO THE FUTURE PART 3D

Of course, getting across the planets and their moons in the system – 19 worlds in all, each with its own orbit and length of day and night – by foot is out of the question. To help you, then, you can hire or buy vehicles or take advantage of – yes! – public transport. The game gives you bus and taxi passes (and a timetable too, for that matter) – taxis, particularly, are only ever a key-press away, and the drivers all chat to you in a friendly enough manner. More than that, they have a system-wide habit of imparting useful snippets of information regarding Mr Bill. While the driver keeps his eyes on the road, you can check out the scenery, most of which consists of offices (including a certain Future Publishing, though – of course – it's empty!) and can be quite distracting for a while. Watch how many rides you take though – you might think that the cool 50 million you began the game with would cover any eventuality, but it only takes one taxi trip on Bacchus to work out that fares there are clocked up at an astronomical rate – it translates into a seven-figure sum just for getting your bum on to the back seat! Beware – the only tip you should consider is getting out of the vehicle altogether!

"The best thing...is that there are six ways to complete it"

Travelling between the worlds is a more complex matter, involving chartering a spaceship. Typically, they are built with transparent hulls, giving you another chance to see what this game has going for it in the visuals department. Once in space, the worlds of the Gamma System appear as variously coloured crescents, as though lit by their sun from the far side. You can see the same effect from some planets' surfaces as moons carve their particular arcs across the sky. Unfortunately, though it sounds good it's not actually that impressive – you might want to travel to different planets for a number of reasons, but checking out the scenery isn't one of them.

So far, so prosaic. Where's the adventure, the excitement, the really wild things? Good question. Playing this game is about as exciting as trying to find the beans in a deserted supermarket. You can spend hours planet hopping without being put in peril by a single polygon. This wouldn't be so disappointing if there were a few more layers of intrigue to peel away, but there aren't. *Mercenary III* has open-ended play and exploration alright, but you get the feeling there isn't really much point to it all. All the effort seems to have been directed at the off-beat astronomy – the technicalities of simply creating such a large playing space – with relatively little put into ensuring an involving storyline. Being impressive from a programming point of view is all very well, but it doesn't in itself do very much for the creation of atmosphere, and nothing whatsoever for enjoyable gameplay.

"After five years...they could have come up with a better game than this"

The best thing about *Mercenary III* is the fact that there are six ways to complete it, five of which are outlined in hint sheets included in the package (don't read Five Different Ways To Play if you don't want any clues). The sixth is left a mystery, to give you something to puzzle out. You don't get a lot else to mull over in this game – though you do get a lot of time (spent travelling) that'd be ideal for mulling – so I guess not having one possible solution out of six is a kind of bonus.

VERY VECTOR WORLD WEARY

That said though, the concept of alternative solutions isn't really that much of an innovation – a thought that just about sums up the game as a whole. Surely after five or six years living with the *Mercenary* concept and two previous stabs at executing it they could have come up with a better game than this? I can imagine that some people will get fun out of the game, but for me life's far too short and precious – I'm tempted to file it, along with the *Midwinter* games and various others, under 'Yes, it's big and impressive but where's the game?'

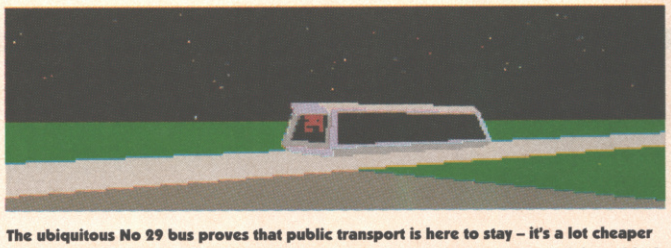
Actually, I've got a better idea. You know what I'm gonna do? I think I'll load it up one more time. I'll go to the casino and blow every credit left in my pocket except for the fare back to the planet Mentis. Then I'll walk (yep, walk) back to the jail. And, if nobody minds, I'll have my old cell back. Thanks.

● *KARL FOSTER*

Here's a typical *Mercenary III* taxi – stylish travel for the polygon about town.

Hmm. The cabs might be futuristic, but it doesn't look as if the drivers have changed much. (Wouldn't some nice bitmapped artwork have been a better idea for the people?)

This monument to PC Bill says it the way it is – yes, he's really big headed!



The ubiquitous No 29 bus proves that public transport is here to stay – it's a lot cheaper way to get about than by taxi, and the game provides you with a handy set of timetables!

UPPERS There are six different solutions, lots of places to explore and plenty of time near the beginning of the game to take a back seat and allow the plot to unfold. If you're impressed by big things you'll be impressed by this.

DOWNERS The 3D graphics couldn't look much more dated and the gameplay is thinner than the atmosphere of an inconsequential asteroid. There's simply very little to do and even less to justify doing it.

THE BOTTOM LINE

A rather average game, both in play and, considering the capabilities of the Amiga, in looks. But, if you were hooked by *Mercenary* and *Damocles*, it'd be churlish not to go for the set.

50 PERCENT

Ultima VI

The False Prophet

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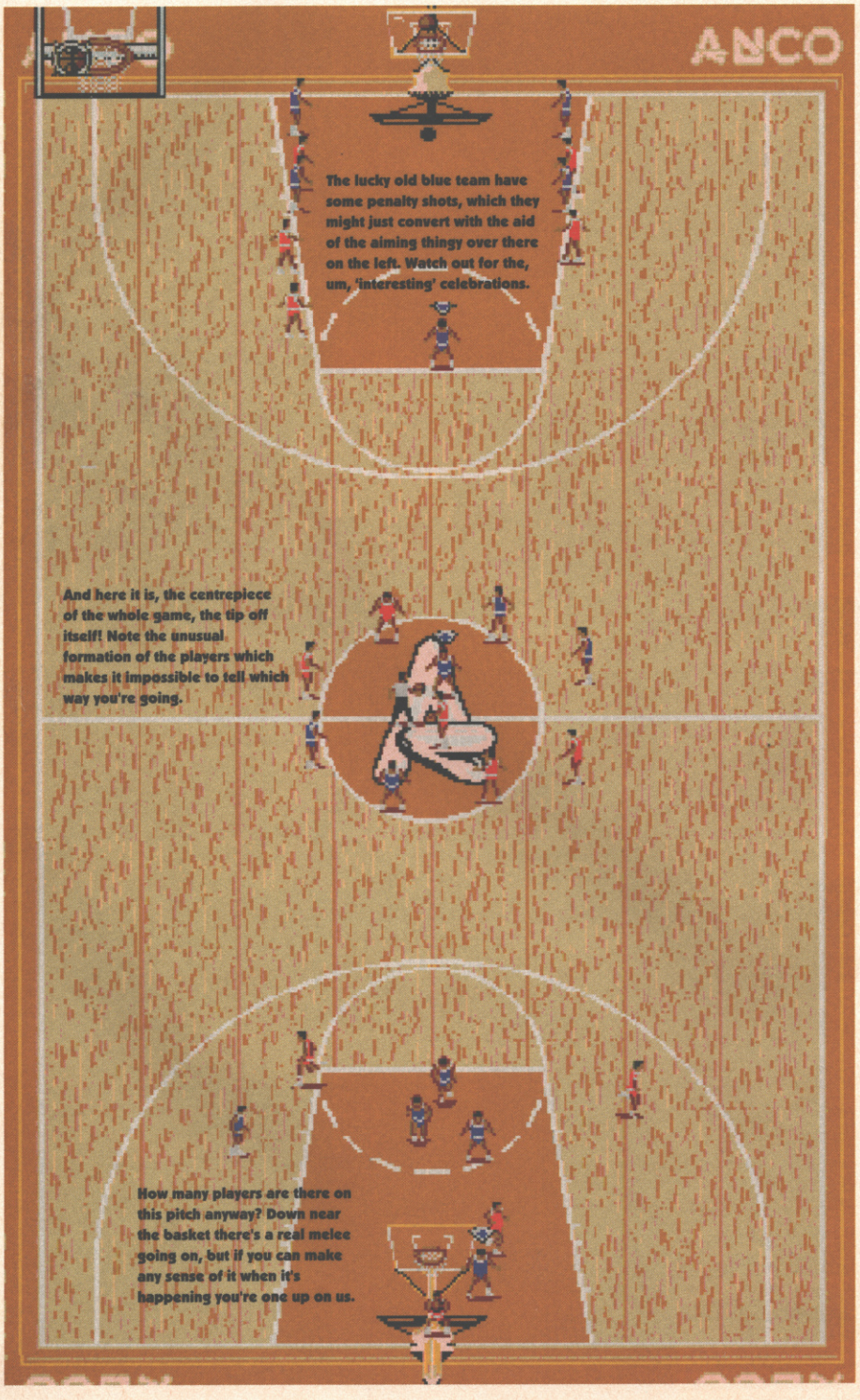
MINDSCAPE INTERNATIONAL

TIP OFF

Game: Tip Off
Publisher: Anco
Price: £24.99
Authors: Steve Screech (writing & design), B Van De Peer & T Smith (graphics), Tobias Van De Peer (music & sound FX)
Release: Out now

In the beginning there was *Kick Off*, and it begat many spin-offs. And lo the creator was pleased, and so made a basketball game in *Kick Off*'s image.



Here's a question for you: what's painfully thin and goes "Mooooouch!"? Give up? The answer's a cow called 'Off'. This particular beast of Anco's must have incredibly sore teats considering the amount of milking it's had, what with *Kick Off*, *Kick Off 2*, *Extra Time*, Data Disks, and *Kick Off 3* to come (and now, no doubt, *Tip Off 2* and *Tip Off* Data Disks will follow in due course...)

Now there's nothing wrong with Anco attempting to create a generic sports simulation series, but it's got to the point where I wish they'd leave a particular subject alone once it's been tackled and move on to something else. If Anco are stuck for ideas, I have a few suggestions for future 'Off' releases, such as a 'sporty' version of strip poker entitled *Kit Off*, and a sexy simulation called *Get Off* in which you attempt to 'get off' with as many birds as possible, (*How about a* real *Graeme Souness football game called* Sent Off*? - Stuart*) and *Puck Off*, which is (*Gary! -Ed*)

KEEP RUNNING WITH THE BALL

Anyway, *Tip Off* is the latest addition to the 'Off' series, and as you should be aware by now it's a basketball simulation – only this one's in the distinctive *Kick Off* style. And a very good simulation of basketball *Tip Off* is too, accurately capturing the fast pace and 'thrills' of yer actual sport.

ON THE OTHER HAND...

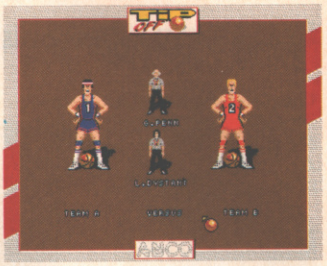
I don't have much argument with any specific comments in Gary's review, but I think he's falling for the hype a bit, as in 'I don't like this but it's supposed to be brilliant so it's probably just me.' *Tip Off* seems to play largely by itself – much of the time it's almost like a game of *Space Ace 2*, with you only controlling the action at intermittent points. Tackling and shooting seems to be entirely arbitrary (on several occasions I managed to score with shots from directly under my own basket), and the players' movement across the court just doesn't feel right either (especially when two of them stand around for ages dancing at each other with no attempt to get near the ball). Come to that, the scale doesn't look right either.
I don't think you'll get anywhere near as much entertainment from this as you should from a full-price product, and for those reasons I'd have marked it about 30 percent lower.
- Stuart Campbell

There's a choice of two skills to practice: individual and team. This picture shows the Practice Individual Skills option.

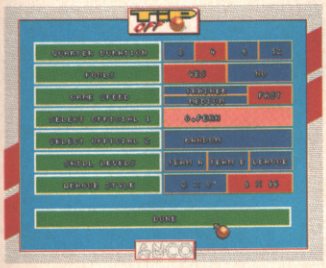
TIP OFF OPTIONS AND FEATURES

Before courting success with yer actual game, Anco's *Tip Off* presents the player with the options screen displayed below.

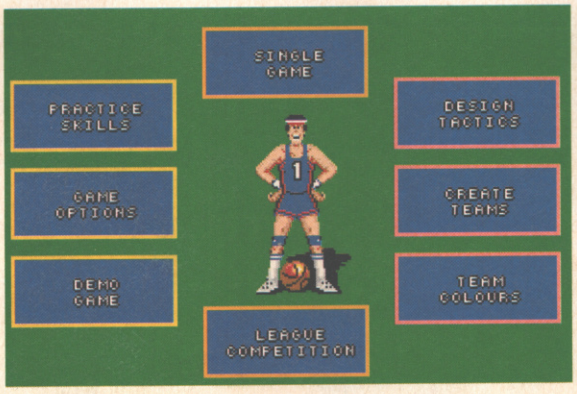
Everything from basket practice, to game demos, team colours options, and player selection menus is accessible via this screen. Other handy sub-menus allow the players to define tactics, and fine-tune the in-game variables.



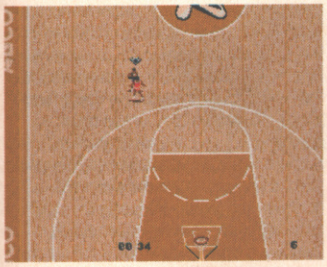
Pit your basketball wits against a human or computer-controlled opponent. Or play in teams of two or four using an adaptor.



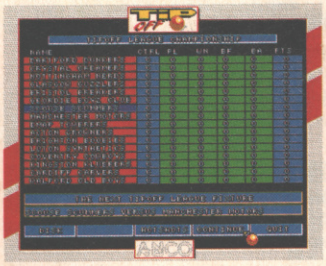
Want longer quarters? You got it. You Want fouls? You got it. Want to alter the speed of play? You got it. Ad infinitum.



Tactics are planned by selecting blocks and placing players. The blocks are then linked together, ready for use during play.

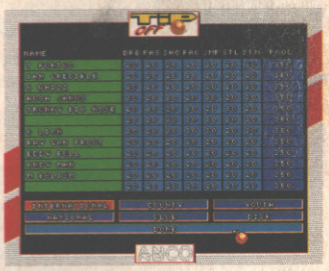


Watching two computer-controlled teams pass, dribble and shoot all over the court may get you hot but it leaves me cold.



In the Tip Off League Championship, 16 teams play against each other in – surprise surprise – a league system.

Ooh, you fussy thing. What's wrong with the standard blue and red strips?



In yet another crazy but true case of 'just like *Kick Off*', *Tip Off*'s team members have a set of values for various skills.

Tip Off can be played on two levels – either as a straight arcade-style basketball match or in a more managerial-cum-coach role in which teams and tactics are created and built upon (see TIP OFF OPTIONS AND FEATURES).

Kick Off players should immediately feel at home with the way *Tip Off* is presented and with the way it plays. It has been said that *Kick Off* is uncontrollable – it certainly seems that way at first. Once the control has been learned however, there's scope for mastering it and personalised manoeuvres can develop.

"It feels too much like *Kick Off 2* on a smaller pitch"

Tip Off is different. It's immediately controllable, for a start, although arguably this is in light of experience gleaned from *Kick Off*. I certainly found it fairly easy to pick up the ball and run around with it, and passing comes naturally enough. It's a doddle to dribble and shoot too (I found I could score from pretty much anywhere on the court). Developing these simple skills is a different kettle of onions altogether, though, and requires plenty of practice, particularly if you're to win against a good human component. The computer opponents play well enough to keep you amused for some time, you see, but, like *Kick Off*, *Tip Off*'s more fun when played against a pal. (Playing with four people – that's two on each team, courtesy of a joystick adaptor – is a clever touch, but a little too confusing for my liking). Sound-wise there's little to write home about: a forgettable title tune and a handful of appropriate but far from outstanding spot effects, including a whistle, the clicking of feet on the court, the slap and pounding bounce of the ball, the clunk as it's sunk (this is followed by a shallow cheer), and a muffled woofing noise for a foul. The addition of the hollow echo of a basketball court would have been appreciated, as would the sound of a crowd's presence.

The manual's also lacking – in fact it's a bit of a mess. It's littered with inaccuracies (but, that said, is usable) and to its credit does feature a section of *Tip Off* rules, based, it says, on American basketball rules but incomplete because the flow of play would be severely disrupted if they used the lot of them. This seems fair enough to me – *Tip Off* certainly plays fluidly as it stands.

REMOVE BASKET, INSERT FOOT

In fact, as far as having any major flaws with regard to being a playable basketball simulation, there doesn't appear to be anything drastically wrong with *Tip Off*. They've come up with pretty much what you'd expect, and it all works well enough. But that's not so say I enjoyed playing the game. I didn't. It's not because I don't like basketball (I'm not especially mad on footy, but I like *Kick Off*) and it's not because I dislike the Anco style. It's just that this feels too much like playing *Kick Off* on a smaller pitch. That's fair warning for those who hate *Kick Off*, but I'm sure there are plenty of other people out there who quite like it, but have had too many variations on the theme now to want any more of the same.

So will Anco do for basketball what they did for football with *Kick Off*? I don't think so. Every dog has its day – but poor old 'Off' is just about milked dry. The sighs of a cow indeed.

● *GARY PENN*

UPPERS There's a sufficient quantity of tedious coach-like malarkey for those so inclined. It's also rather playable, which is good news for arcade heads. If you like basketball, and aren't sick to death of *Kick Off*, you'll like this.

DOWNERS The control system isn't as wholly intuitive as it should be. Otherwise, there's little to moan about – well, unless you can't stand the *Kick Off* style in the first place, that is.

THE BOTTOM LINE
A decent (but uninspired) simulation of basketball – what more can I say?

75 PERCENT

Let Sierra take you back to pre-WW2 China, a land of hired assassins, mysterious

Game: Hearts Of China
Publisher: Sierra
Price: £34.99
Author: Dynamix
Release: Out now

Ever wanted to play those new fangled CD-based adventure games? Well now you can, and without needing a CD drive or a single shiny disk either. Hey, wait there! I know you think I'm blabbering on incoherently, but give me a moment to explain. Imagine that if in place of photographed stills (as in CDTV games such as *Psycho Killer* – a really terrifying game, and no mistake), an adventure sort of thing were to use digitised graphics – with artwork for backdrops and real people in costume for the characters. It's a crazy idea, but one which just might work. And funnily enough, it just about has...

Sierra's latest first-person perspective graphic-adventure-novel-simulation-cinematic experience takes the game engine used in the earlier *Rise Of The Dragon* one step further. Bolted onto this system is an adventure which recalls the wonderful days of Tales Of The Gold Monkey (an excellent-ish Indy-style TV series from the early eighties) and High Road To China (y'know, that daft Tom Selleck yarn) – weird when you consider that *Rise Of The Dragon* owed more than a little to Black Rain (another flick with a Chinese backdrop, this time moodily directed by Ridley Scott).

One of the nice series of stills you get after making a bad decision in *H Of C*. Here you're trying to recruit helpers, but it all goes wrong, ending with you dead on the floor. Oops!

CLAM CHOWDER, REASON & PLOT

But anyway, back to the huge (ie hard drive very, very highly recommended) hulk of an adventure in hand. The plot (for plot is all important in these things) concerns 'Lucky' Jake Masters – an apple-pie eating, all-American xenophobic in the land of honour, humility and a thoroughly evil dictator.

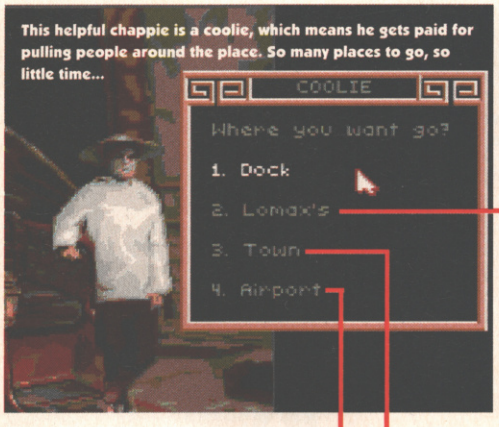
This particularly unsavoury character has kidnapped Nurse Kate Lomax – a benevolent girl, whose mission in life is to help the Chinese peasants (and win a Nobel peace prize). The game commences at the dock, where you receive a directive from shady businessman Lomax (father of Nurse Kate, funnily enough) to check out a ninja guy by the name of Chi, before getting the hell out of town to rescue his daughter. Once the honourable Chi has been recruited, it's onto the airport, where Lucky's trusty plane awaits, ready to take the intrepid pair to the evil warlord's fortress, and deeper into action, adventure, and other dynamic words beginning with 'a'.

And so, in time honoured fashion, we come to the control system. *Hearts Of China* follows current trends by dispensing entirely with the laborious task of typing. Instead there are certain conversations where the player chooses one of a selection of set answers, and others which flow without any input from the player. Added to this is a pretty unobtrusive object manipulation system, allowing (say) a rope and grappling hook to be fastened together, clothes to be worn, guns to be held etc, all using the mouse pointer. It's all remarkably user-friendly – there's nothing worse than a game engine which

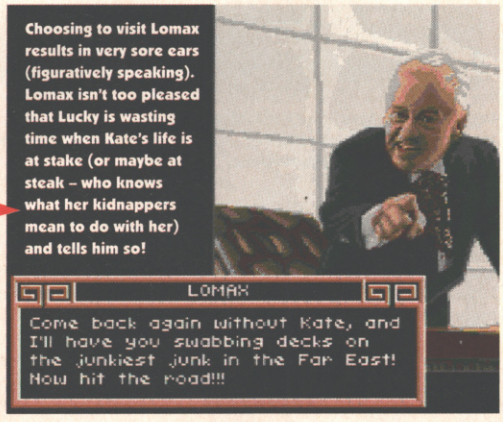
TAKING THE HIGH ROAD (TO CHINA)

Playing *Hearts Of China* is akin to reading a comic, the difference being that the player controls the action (well, to some extent).

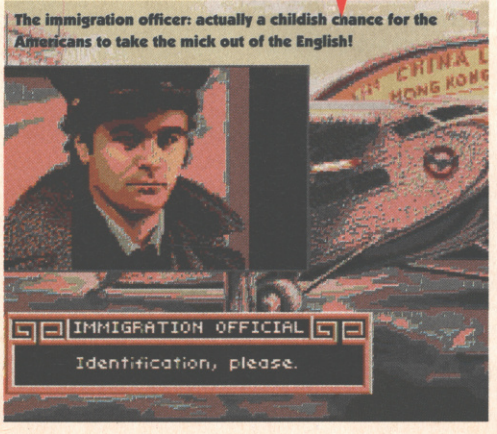
Digitised pictures, handpainted backdrops, windows and menus are all combined to offer a gorgeously presented and pleasantly smooth ride through the high roads of China. Here we see Lucky ready to embark on his quest...



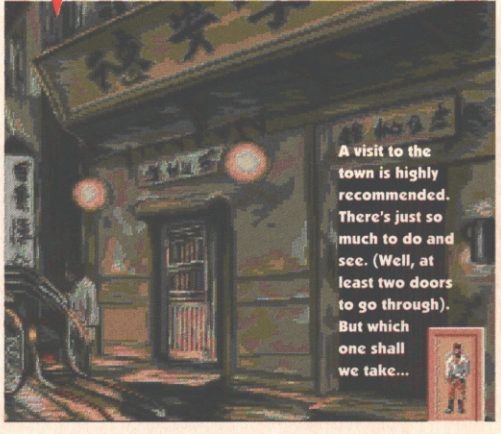
This helpful chappie is a coolie, which means he gets paid for pulling people around the place. So many places to go, so little time...



Choosing to visit Lomax results in very sore ears (figuratively speaking). Lomax isn't too pleased that Lucky is wasting time when Kate's life is at stake (or maybe at steak – who knows what her kidnappers mean to do with her) and tells him so!



The immigration officer: actually a childish chance for the Americans to take the mick out of the English!



A visit to the town is highly recommended. There's just so much to do and see. (Well, at least two doors to go through). But which one shall we take...

RICE OF THE DRAGON

Don't think *Hearts Of China* is simply a tale of hi-jinks, high adventure and derring-do...

Oh no, it's actually a deeply moving and highly charged story of love, humility, and the triumph of the soul. But none of that is much interest to us. Let us, instead, see just how 'Lucky' ended up in such a mess...

European exiles, and hot-headed young heroes like this 'Lucky' Jake Masters...

HEARTS OF CHINA

This charming guy is called Ho. An old friend of Lucky, he knows our hero well enough to absolutely refuse him any alcohol. Lucky may be a all-round guy, but it seems he can't hold his beer (and everyone seems to know it too).

YOU WILL FLIP OVER THIS ONE

Hearts Of China not only uses all the established ideas of modern graphic adventures, but it even manages to build on them. Flipping control between the hot-headed Lucky and the calm and collected Chi is a cool idea, and it's not just a gimmick – many of the puzzles actually require the use of a particular character's abilities. The inclusion of action sequences, while not exactly original, seems to fit in better than usual too. They feel like a natural progression for the game to take, rather than a tacky, crowd-pleasing add-on to the basic adventure structure. So what's wrong with it? Well, one thing I'm still not convinced about is Sierra's dedication to slider menus. When the level of on-screen detail can be adjusted using one of these things I feel the degree of user-definability is getting just a little over-the-top. I can understand floppy drive users wanting less detail to speed things up a bit, but why the program can't do this automatically, or simply have an on-off system, I don't know. It just smacks of an attempt to be flash.

Still, that aside, this is a very impressive game. I wasn't expecting to find a good yarn and solid playability behind the flash control system and digitised graphics, but life's full of nice surprises. In my last review of a Sierra game (*Kings Quest V*) I criticised the appalling plot, and suggested that if Sierra pulled their socks up in this area, their games would improve no end. With *Hearts Of China* they've made that turnaround, and we must applaud them for it. As programmers get the hang of game systems, the emphasis is put right back on the story – *Hearts Of China* demonstrating it perfectly. For anyone with one meg and a hard drive this can be thoroughly recommended. If you don't relish the chance to play an arrogant bone-headed American egotist who gets all the best one liners you probably shouldn't be playing adventure games in the first place!

● *MARK RAMSHAW*

"It feels like taking part in a Boy's Own escapade"

Objects can be worn, used on someone you meet or each other, or passed between characters using this straightforward inventory screen. There's even a cute pic of Chi dressed up..!

This is the hero of the story, 'Lucky' Jake Masters. It's no wonder girls go weak at the knees and short of breath when they see him. (They're probably laughing at his ridiculous trousers!)

UPPERS Beautiful 'painted' backdrops, with just enough relevance and animation to make them justifiable, and a pretty sensible control system make *Hearts Of China* an enjoyable Far East romp. The good strong script is what really makes it all work, though.

DOWNERS The lack of speed, and the need for one meg and a hard drive, is going to irritate some, while the lack of real flexibility (despite the attempts at offering multiple pathways) is simply too apparent. The suspension of disbelief isn't quite sustained throughout. And there're too many sudden death situations for my liking.

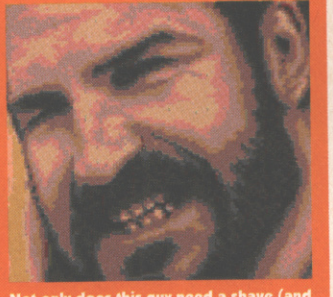
THE BOTTOM LINE

Sierra are carving themselves a niche with this sort of thing. Almost European in style (*Maupiti Island* springs to mind), *Hearts Of China* offers an interesting diversion from the usual Lucasfilm approach to graphic adventures. Neat.

84 PERCENT

Deep in the heart of Texas – oops, sorry, China – we find a nurse tending to the sick peasants (they never miss an episode of Knight Rider – *that's* how sick they are).

It's the beautiful (and remarkably charitable) Nurse Kate Lomax. Watch out Kate! I think there's somebody hiding behind that bush over there.



Not only does this guy need a shave (and more plastic surgery than Michael J's had done), but he's also a thoroughly evil kidnapping kind of guy. Boo!

SPACE A

In a month of gorgeous cartoon-style graphics, the latest Don Bluth spectacular

ACE II

Game: Space Ace II – Borf's Revenge
Publisher: Empire
Authors: David Foster, Tony Bozek (sound and graphics)
Price: £34.99
Release: Out now

ar

is still stunning, visually. It's also the traditional complete disaster gameplay-wise (and price-wise too). Surely now it's time to say enough is enough?

Okay, there's not much room left, so I'll get straight to the point. Well, in fact I've got six points, one for each disk the game comes on (plus one more). First up, you might be surprised to note that despite coming on five disks, *Space Ace II* only really gives you about four sequences of action, which are then subdivided into the tiny little blow-by-blow segments or 'scenes' which you actually play. This, coupled with the tendency of the animations and samples to be cut off abruptly, gives the game a very bitty feel.

Secondly, it's lazy. The same death sequences are used repeatedly, even in very different scenarios. Since half the fun of the coin-op was seeing all the amusing ways in which Ace could bite the dust, this is a great shame, and it limits the game's lasting appeal even further – you can't even go around just dying in different ways for laughs like you could in the arcade.

Thirdly, it took me about an hour of solid playing to get through about 70 percent of the 27 'scenes', and that without trying very hard.

Fourthly, having the manual explain to you practically move by move what you have to do to get through each part robs you of the sense of reward you'd at least get if you worked it all out yourself.

Fifthly, it's been said before, but it really is ridiculous for a game of this size and unwieldiness not to be hard-drive installable. If you've only got one disk drive, you'll spend twice as much time disk-swapping as you will actually playing the game, and that ratio gets worse rather than better as you progress.

And sixthly, it's another obvious gripe, but the price is a disgrace. It isn't because of the number of disks (US Gold's *Godfather* comes on six, and it isn't this expensive), it can't be because of development costs (after *Dragon's Lair* and the previous *Space Ace*, the game was already licenced and largely written), and it certainly isn't because of the lush packaging – all you get is a big box full of air, a slim instruction manual (here, surely, is a game that would have stood a nice story-setting novella or something), and a 'free' poster that's so crap it's more of an insult than a bonus.

Still, the graphics are nice. Wow.

● *STUART CAMPBELL*

UPPERS It looks pretty, and it's moderately entertaining for about the first 3 minutes.

DOWNERS You'll finish it inside three hours (absolute maximum) and you'll hate it so much by the end that you'll never want to see it again.

THE BOTTOM LINE

Disjointed, ridiculously small, gameplay-free, stupendously overpriced, immensely frustrating, I could go on all day. There isn't anyone alive who's got so much money that they can afford to waste £34.99 on complete trash like this.

17 PERCENT

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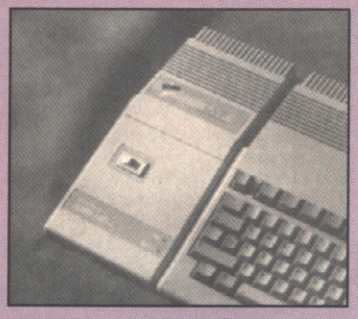

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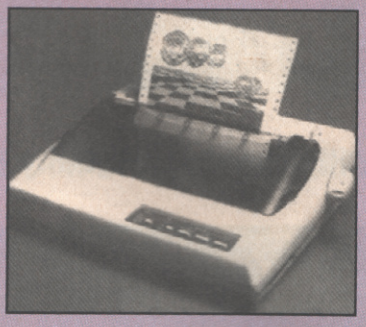

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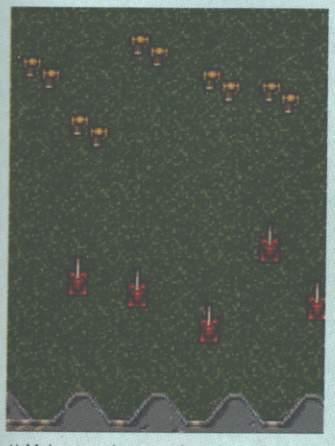
BATTLE ISLE

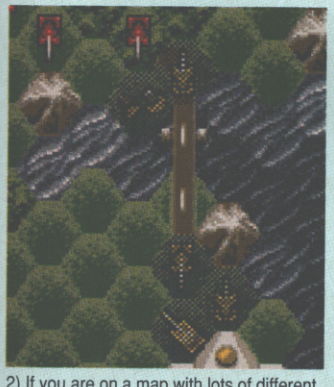
COMPLETE control

Who ever said strategy games are almost by definition boring? (Ahem, yes, well...) Okay, we might have said it once upon a time, but not now we've seen *Battle Isle* – a remarkably successful hex-based war game for all the family! It's easy to get to grips with, but that doesn't mean it's easy *per se* – here are a few little hints and tips to help you get a bit further with it...

GENERAL PLAYING TIPS



1) Make sure that you always send your strongest units to fight first – they'll last longer, do better, and should allow you to gather a degree of experience. Your first aim should always be to destroy the enemy robots.



2) If you are on a map with lots of different depots, concentrate your efforts on the strongest one – you want to make sure that you get it firmly in your hands before spreading your efforts elsewhere.

3) If two enemy robots stand in front of a depot, leave your opponent with the building. The next turn you can simply conquer the depot, meaning that you avoid an un-necessary fight and gain the depot at the same time.

4) If your opponent has a construction plant, concentrate on putting your troops in the fields around it so that your opponent can't easily bring his armies anywhere blooming near it!

5) If your opponent has a plane, always leave a strong force to defend your headquarters – the speed of his plane-assisted movement will mean he'll take it in no time at all otherwise.

AND THOSE MPORTANT CODES...

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GAMMA
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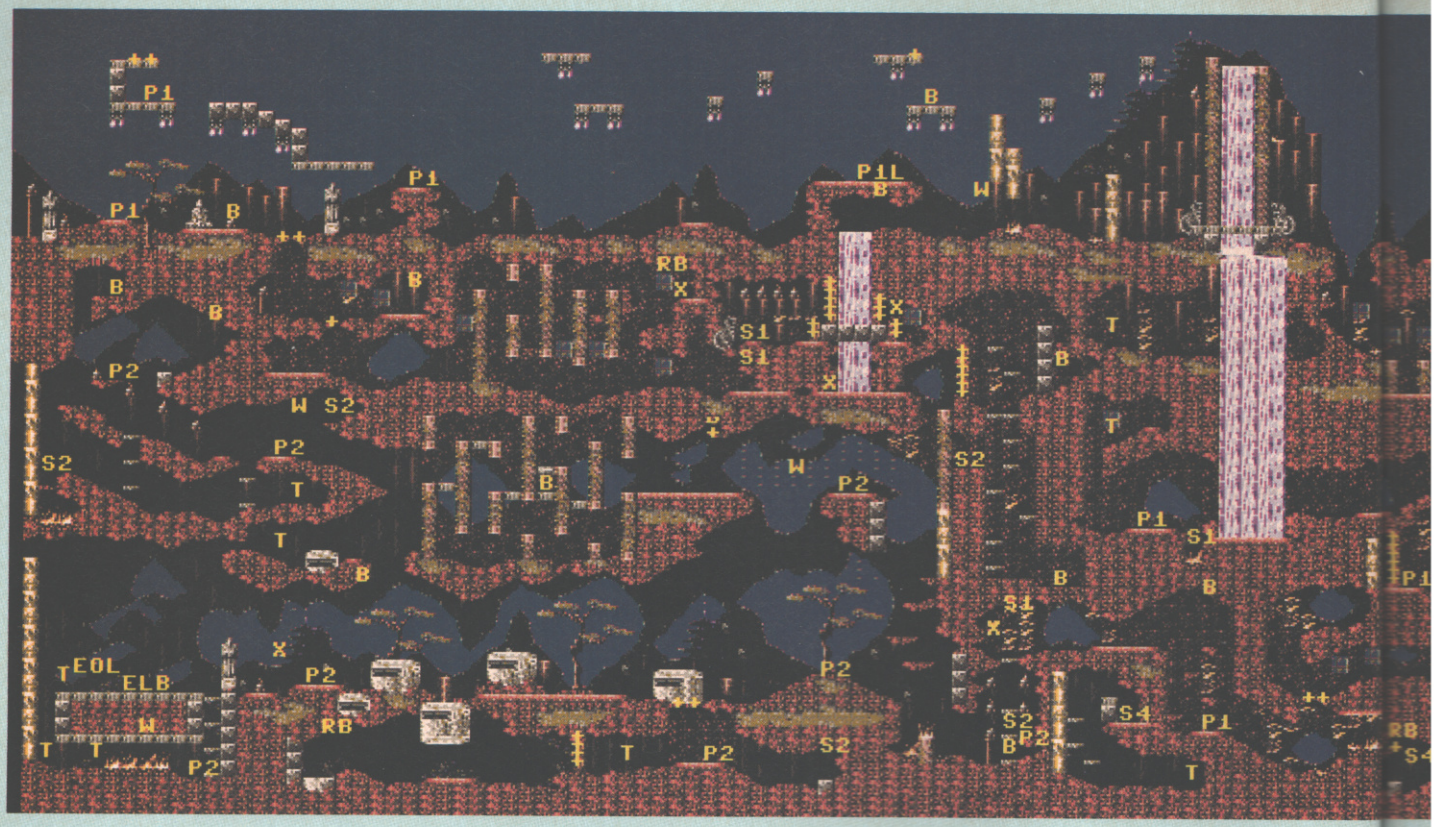
EAGLE
METAN
FOTON
POLAR
TIGER
SNAKE
ZENIT
DONN
VESTA
OXXID
DEMON
GIANT

Welcome to Complete Control, AMIGA POWER's rather spanky hints'n'tips section. This month the last of our *Blues Brothers* maps, *Heimdall* tips, *First Samurai* and more. Next month, our own Jonathan Davies kicks off with a seriously massive Q & A column – if you've got yourself stuck on one of your games, write to 'the man in the know' here at the usual AP address.

ACTION REPLAY CHEATS (WHICH REQUIRE A DATEL ACTION REPLAY CARTRIDGE TO WORK!)

We have been inundated with your cheats and codes over the past month and it's quite obvious what most of you were doing over Christmas. Keep up the good work. Julio Riesco from the Wirral sent us some interesting cheats but we do emphasize that a Datel Action Replay cartridge is needed to use these cheats.

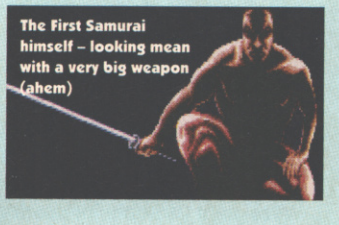
Name of Game	Function Altered	Address to Poke
Terminator 2	Infinite Lives	M 0080B4
Last Ninja 3	Infinite Lives	M 02B77F
Frenetic	Lives	M 0064B1
Robocod	Energy	M 002287
Captain Planet	Lives	M C00547
Exterminator	Credits	M 03C733
Black Tiger	Lives	M 015FFD
Monty Python	Lives	M 016057
Hard Drivin' 2	Timer	M C22BB8
Buggy Boy	Timer	M 022ACB
Toki	Lives	M 023CD9
Chuckie Egg 2	Lives	M 010583
Magic Pockets	Credits	M 001792
Paperboy	Lives	M 006529



FIRST SA

Quite simply one of the best arcade adventures *ever*, Vivid Image's recent return to top form seems to have been keeping many of you awake at night. Fret no more, though, because printed here (courtesy of Vivid Image themselves) is a complete map to the first four levels of the game.

Start your quest near the top left – the exit to level four can be found at the bottom right of the cave layout. (The key below indicates where objects of interest are located).



The First Samurai himself – looking mean with a very big weapon (ahem)

KEY TO LEVELS ONE TO FOUR OF THE FIRST SAMURAI

B – Bell.

RB – Recurring bell.

X – Potion.

L – Lamp.

S1 – Special object for level one – a log.

S2 – Special object for level two – a bucket.

S3 – Special object for level three – a rock.

S4 – Special object for level four – an electric spark.

ELB – End of level guardian.

EOL – End of level.

P (number) – Recharge pot.

W – Wizard hint point.

T – Transporter.

+ – Destroyable piece of background.

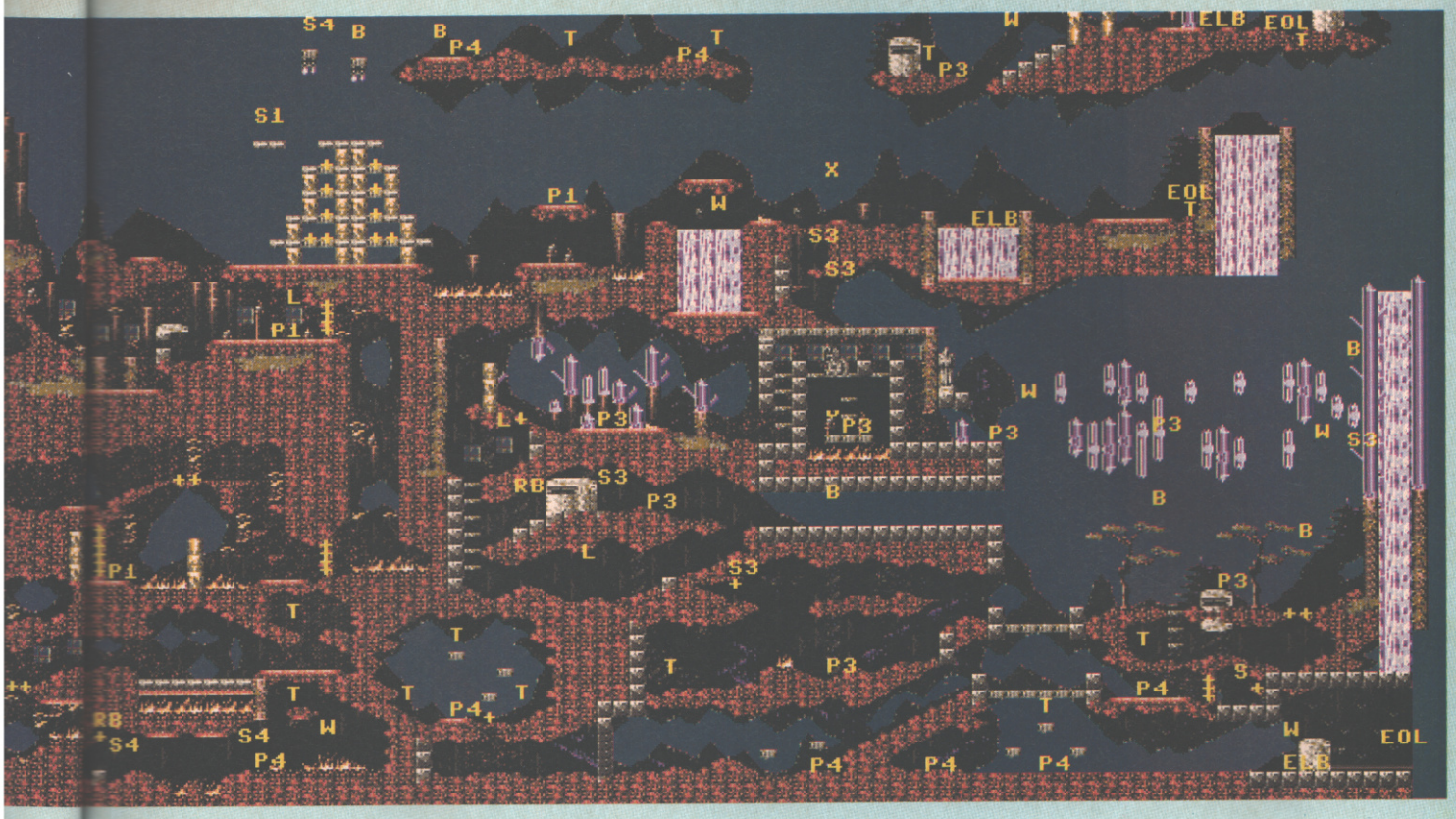
THAT FIRST SAMURAI INTRO SEQUENCE IN FULL

We showed you plenty of the action sequences – hell, it's all action sequences! – from *First Samurai* when we reviewed it a couple of months ago. What you may never have seen before, though, is this rather snazzy intro sequence showing how our hero set out on his time travelling quest. Yes, the storyline *is* rather like that of *The Last Ninja* series (the name is a slight joke at its expense) but it's even closer to a certain fairly famous comic. Tell us which one for a top software prize!

We're back in ancient Japan – a screen slides back to reveal our Samurai and his Master lost deep in meditation.

Yes, the Master gets killed. In desperation the Samurai calls on the help of...

... the powerful wizard mage! Fearing defeat the Demon King flees...



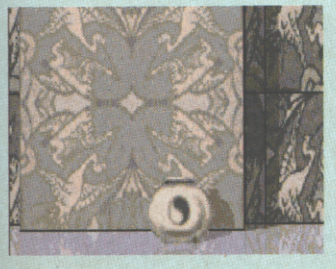
SAMURAI

But oh no, what's this? (It looks to us like the Demon King descending from his Mountain Domain...)

The Demon King creeps stealthily towards the Samurai and his Master. (What's he after, eh..?)

Whatever it is, it looks like you'll have trouble stopping him. Against the Demon's magic our young Samurai is defenceless.

Alone, his Master is forced to battle with the Demon King. (You know what's going to happen, don't you?)



...into the far future! Tormented, the Samurai seeks the help of the Mage...

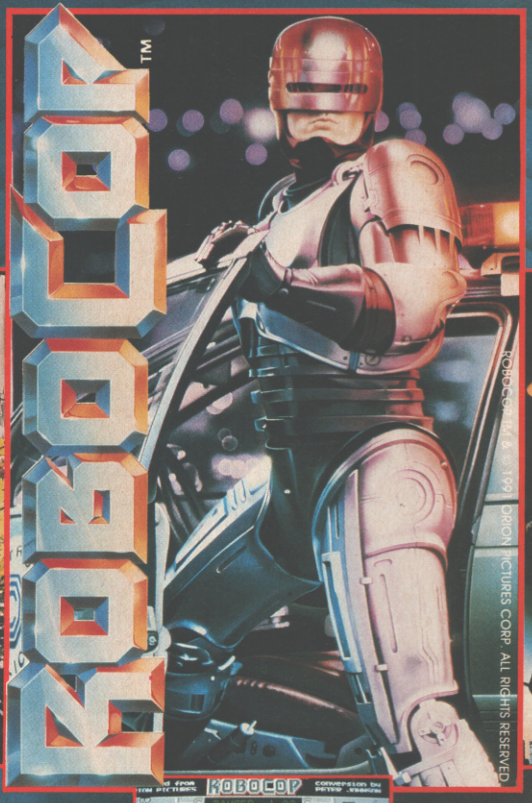
...to learn the rudiments of Magic. Only with his help will he learn power enough...

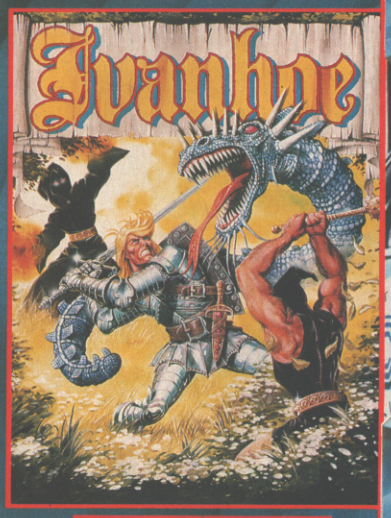
...to defeat the Demon. Armed with a powerful magic sword...

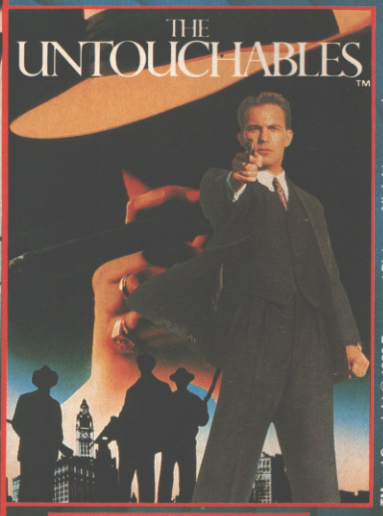
...he follows the Demon through time to avenge his Master's death!

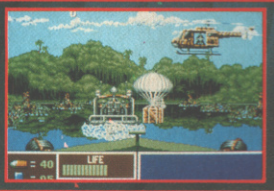
QUALITY ACTION

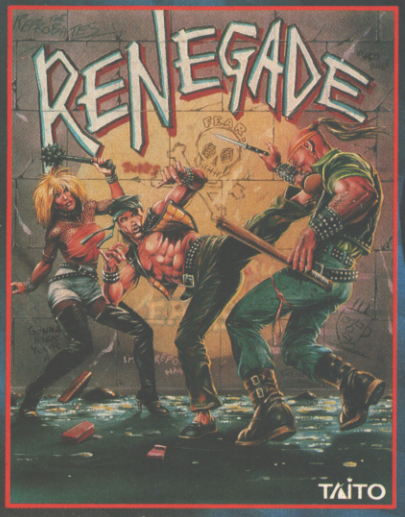
AT A PRICE YOU CAN'T AFFORD TO MISS











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ATARI ST

HEIMDALL

One of the prettiest games of the last twelve months – and one of the few to successfully combine real cartoon-style graphics with an actual game – *Heimdall* is actually harder to complete than it looks. No complete solution yet – we don't want to spoil it for all the people who've yet to have a proper chance of playing it – but here're some hints and tips from Core to get you going...

MAKING THE MOST OF CREW SELECTION

There are lots of characters to choose between, but whichever variations on a theme you want, make sure you always have...

A BEZERKER
These are obviously very useful in combat as they are strong and have good health.

A WARRIOR
These, like the Bezerker, are used in combat.

A WIZARD
Essential – you need to have someone to back up Heimdall's own rune lore and spell casting skills (just in case you accidentally kill off your leader).

A BLACKSMITH
They don't normally match or better the strength of warriors, nor do they come with as much dexterity or rune skills, but they are useful in combat.

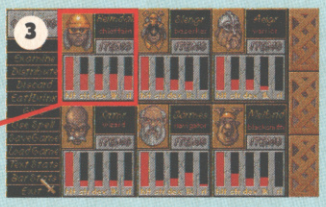
A NAVIGATOR
These warn you if you will lose energy on long sea journeys, giving you the chance to collect more food before departing.

GENERAL PLAYING TIPS

1) Before selecting an island, distribute all the gold to one member of your landing party and then use him as your gold holder throughout the game (this saves precious carrying space!). Do this with the keys as well so that you don't lose track of who's got what key in your party.

2) Collect lots of food. This is the best way of keeping the crew alive and well – you also need food for the long sea journeys between the islands, because without extra food you will lose lots of energy while travelling. Remember, too, when you're back at the the map screen, to distribute food to the other members left on the ship.

3) Always remember to check on your party's health stats at regular points within the game and keep them fed! It's especially important you don't forget old Heimie himself – otherwise he'll get murdered in a fight like this one!



4) Any scrolls that can't be read by any of the crew should be kept, not discarded, just in case it's a resurrection or energy (all) spell that you might need later!

5) Discard any unwanted weapons (see combat hints for the best selection) – they take up valuable space that could be better used for food or spells.

6) Always examine scrolls after collecting them and discard any that you have lots of (such as detect traps/ disarm traps). Try to keep some spares on the ship if you don't want to discard the lot of them.

COMBAT HINTS

7) Always check your party's health before attacking an enemy, especially Heimdall as he's the main character and the best all rounder. We can't have you killing him off by mistake now, can we?

8) Use daggers in fights as they work fastest. Take them from another character (a) to give to Heimdall (b) if he hasn't already got them, as he's the first one to fight.

9) The best weapons to use are Silver Daggers, Runeswords or Runic Axes, as these have more hit/damage points than normal weapons.

10) If you use any of the swords, remember to time your hits with the enemy's so that you strike when he's lining up his go at you and his defenses are down. This should give you more hits than by just swinging madly at the enemy.

11) Always keep an eye on the health bar of the character who is fighting. If it gets too low then change characters or use an energy spell to revive him.

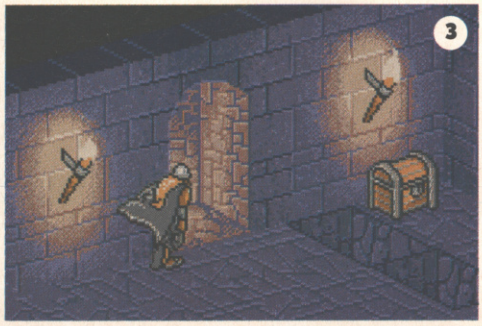
CHESTS

12) Don't bother using a disarm traps spell on a chest – it's not worth wasting a valuable spell on one just for the few health points you'll save by using it (if indeed there is a trap on it).

AND FINALLY...

1) Beware of booby trapped floor switches – some of them activate hidden arrows!

2) Watch out for hidden pits around otherwise innocent-looking chests!



3) Try to keep to an edge in a room/ passage, just in case there are traps in the middle. You might run into a trap along the edge, but its better to do that than walk straight into two or more in the middle!

4) Try to concentrate on increasing Heimdall's or your wizard's runelore skills. This is done with potions marked with various rune symbols – some increase strength/health while others increase runelore. This will aid in reading scrolls and using certain spells within the game. (There are some potions on island 3 in Midgard!)

5) Watch out for spiders webs! Don't go too close for fear of running into a spider – they're quite mean and nasty!

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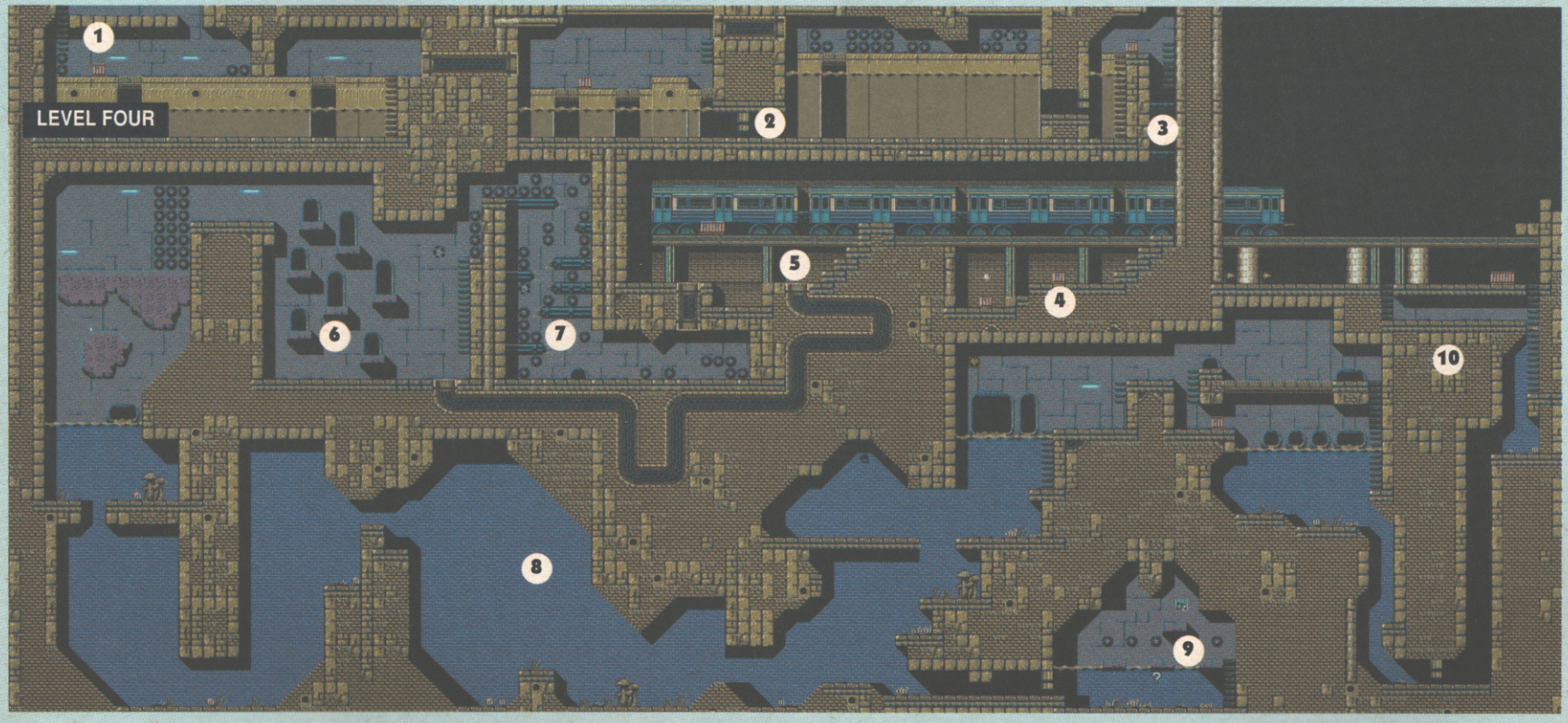
QUICK! GET HIM OFF!

Hang on, I thought we just took issue one and changed all the titles so we could take two weeks off!

... But you'll have to move fast

THE BLUES BROTHERS

AMIGA POWER proudly presents the second part of our guide to this superb platform game, courtesy of Stuart and Palace.



1 Here's where you start – watch out for the tricky and fast-moving little baddie, and make sure you don't throw your crate right over his head!

2 It's all pretty plain sailing through to the sliding door here – just go carefully to avoid the nasty big fish who swims around in the pool immediately before it.

3 More simple stuff (not that that means it isn't *difficult*, it's just simple) until you reach this bit. Isn't it impossible to go down through that baddie without getting hit? Well, yes it is. But why don't you take a really close look at that wall...

4 Getting across the train roof can be tricky, so jump down here, get the crate, then stand underneath the level of the floor with the crate sticking up, so that the two baddies both run into it and die.

5 Now let yourself get sucked down this pipe, which will deposit you safely at the other end. Jump out quickly though, or it'll just suck you right back in again.

6 If you carry a crate through the pipe, you can use it to kill the bubble at this end. Now just go through the doors (experiment!) until you find yourself at the top.

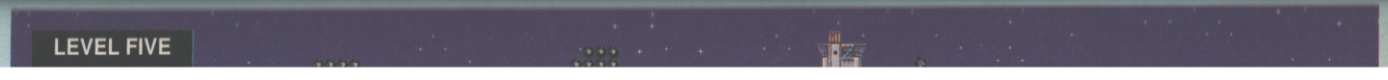
7 If you prefer, you can skip the last two stages and go through here for lots of bonus records – but you'll probably die.

8 This stuff's all pretty obvious – swim through the sewers, carefully avoiding collision with the fish.

9 Here's what you're after on this level, but be careful! If you try to jump up without using the ladder, you'll float up into the air and get stuck (we think this is a bug, playtesting fans).

10 ...and then it's plain sailing again until you show up here. Nip in quickly to kill the nasties with the crates, then go to the flags to complete the level.

1 Another nice easy start, with a couple of crates conveniently placed for you to



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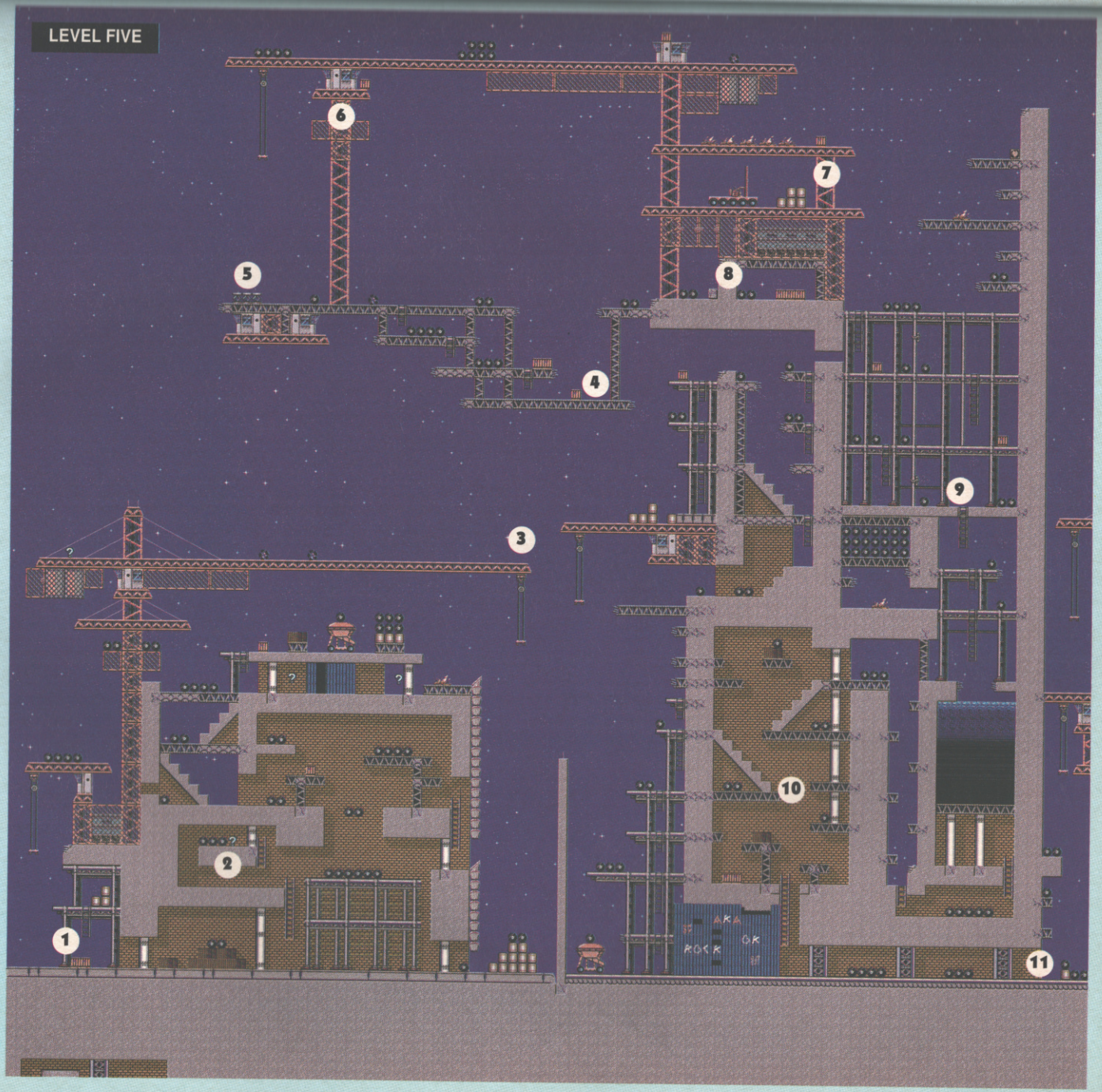


1 Another nice easy start, with a couple of crates conveniently placed for you to dispose of the first baddies.

2 Most of the question marks you'll find on this level are bad ones – either dance bonuses or minus records. Not that this one necessarily is...

3 You can choose which route you prefer to get to this point by yourself – each alternative has its own pros and cons, but they'll all get you to here eventually, where you should jump across the two lifts and get yourself onto the second main section.

4 The only way to go is up now, but before you make this jump you'd be smart to pick up a crate and lug it across the gap with you. That'll let you pick up the other one and use it to do the old 'let the baddies above you crash into the crate without you having to throw it, so you can kill loads of enemies with one crate' trick on the next few platforms.

5 Take a crate with you onto this spring-board and bounce up and down for a while until the lift comes.

6 ...which will mean that you can kill the policeman and his dog on top of the crane without putting yourself in any danger. Watch out for the nasty standing by the control box, though.

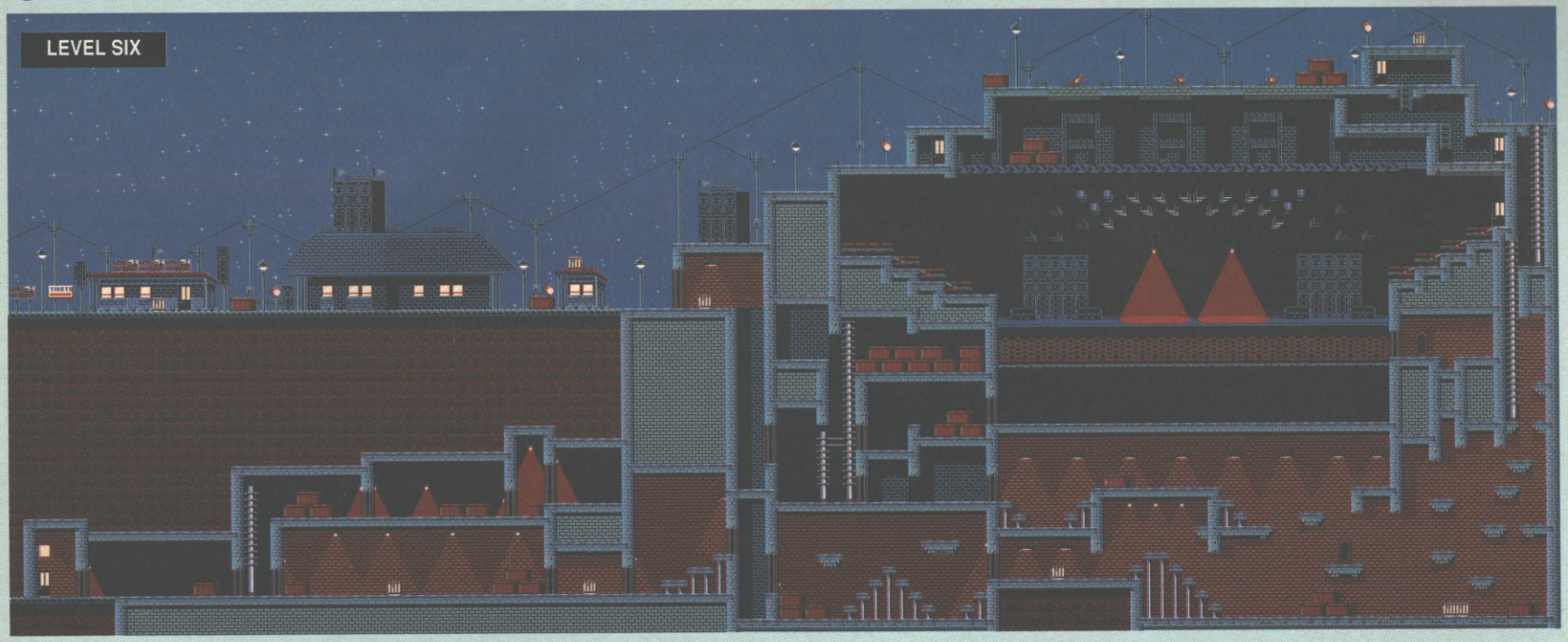
7 Go right to the edge of the crane before you drop down, that'll make sure you avoid all the dangerous fires on the level below.

8 This is the concert licence which will allow you to play the gig. Unfortunately, to get to it you'll have to take a route which necessitates going all through the crane-climbing bit you've just done again, but that's life for you.

9 It's worth doubling back a lot to make sure you've always got a crate in this section, as you don't get to see that many baddies until you're almost on top of them.

10 If you're careful at the bottom of the last section, you'll get into this bit without having to faff around in the big pit.

11 ...and then you'll get to here, which means the level's practically over. Since this is the last real part of the game, we'll leave you just this little bit to negotiate all by yourself...

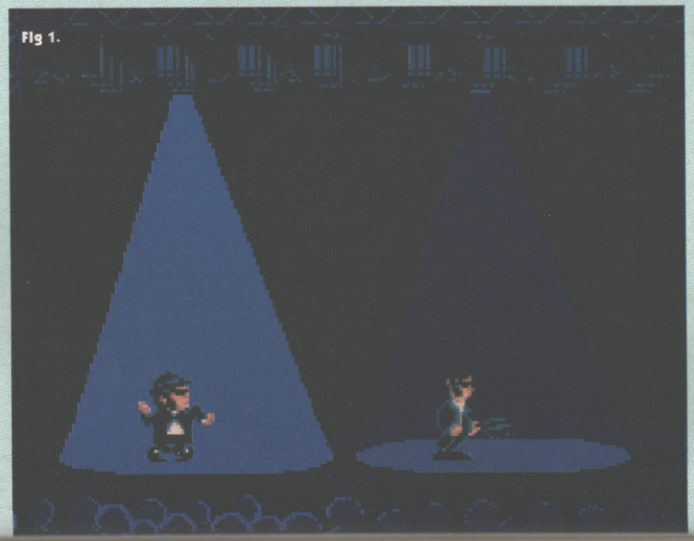


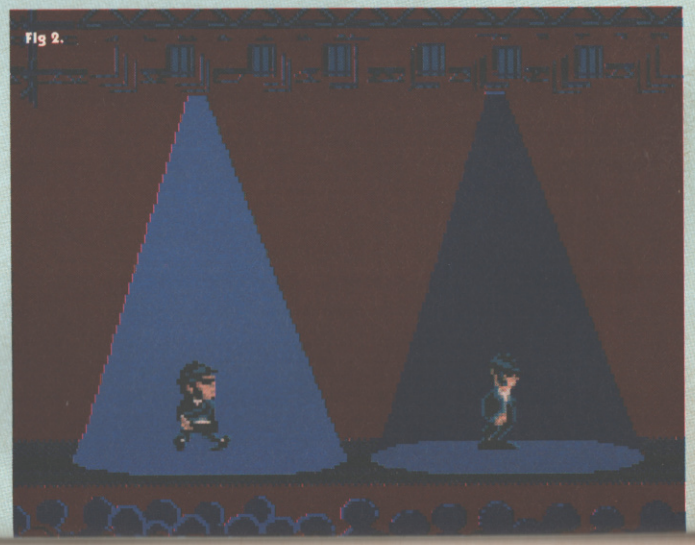
Nothing too testing in this level, it being more of an extended end sequence than an actual last level. You'll encounter the odd baddie, but they're really only token resistance, and you'll find plenty of crates lying around to take care of them, so we won't spoil your fun by giving you an exact route through to the end (we're all heart, n'est-ce pas?). All that's left is to explore for a bit until you find your way to the place where Jake and Elwood truly belong – in the spotlights. In the auditorium isn't good enough, in the crowd isn't good enough, so don't be fooled by those dead ends. Keep going, and don't give up until you hit the stage!

CHEAT!

Of course, if you're sitting at home thinking, 'It's all very well you printing maps of levels four, five and six of *The Blues Brothers*, but I can't even finish level three yet', then you might feel a bit left out. Well, stop worrying, you old softy.

What you need is a cheat mode, and we're just the people to give you one (if you'll pardon the expression). It's easy as pie to use, just wait until the character selection screen appears (fig.1), then type in 'HOULQ', which should cause the colour of the screen to change (as in fig.2). Now just press the appropriate number key for the level you want to play (ie 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 or 6) then hit the space bar, and away you go...

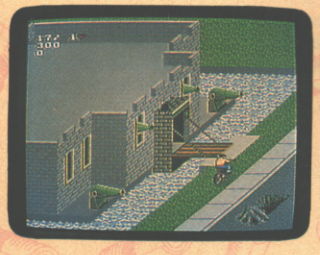


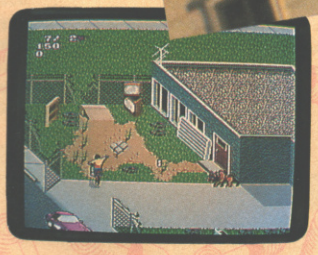


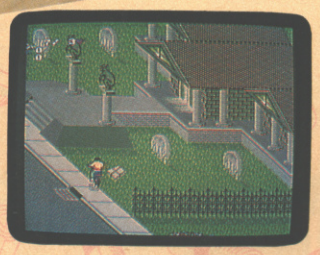
Look out - he's back!

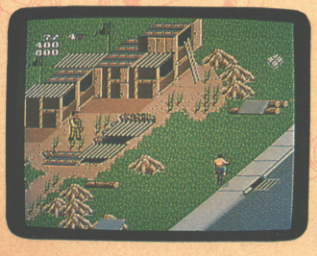
PAPERBOY 2

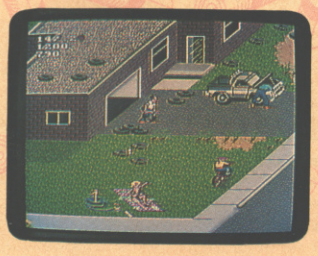
No window is safe. No fence is too high. The paperboy is determined to deliver the paper to his subscribers any way he can. Tossing papers left and right, riding in three directions, jumping anything, this free-wheeling carrier visits more neighbourhoods and houses, faces more targets and obstacles, in more vivid colours than ever before.
Plus, rad stunt riding and BMX tracks in bonus rounds. Choose to ride as either Paperboy or Papergirl too!

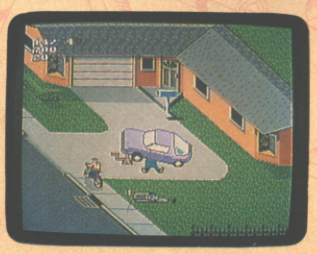












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press the appropriate number key for the level you want to play (ie 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 or 6) then hit the space bar, and away you go...

AMIGA POWER PRESENTS THE ULTIMATE SPRING GAME GUIDE

With the new year comes new games – but which ones are the future classics?

And, indeed, which ones will you have completely forgotten by this time next year? Here's where you get your first chance to make a judgement, with our exclusive Spring Games preview. Over the next eight pages we look at some of the best and worst of the new season's games...

So what's on offer then? Well, a bit of everything really – adventures are well represented for a start (indeed, there's a 100 percent guaranteed, cast iron classic to be found not a million miles from these very words), while solid 3D sims also push forward in new directions. If you've ever fancied piloting anything from a Flying Fortress to – yes! – the Space Shuttle, here's your chance. It's not all high end, four-years-in-the-making stuff though – the next few months will feature a nice selection of your more arcadey stuff too (who mentioned *Parasol Stars*?) Here, then, is what you can expect to be playing over the next four months...

TOP LEFT: Digging up the past can prove useful when it comes to magic. It's amazing what ingredients are needed to make a voodoo doll – still, if it's a bone that's necessary, there are (fairly distasteful!) ways and means to get one.
LEFT: Cliff-hangers abound in *Monkey Island 2*. In fact, here comes one now.
ABOVE: The governor of Phatt Island certainly lives up to expectations of weirdness. Supported by the next best thing to an intravenous drip, he's not quite as stunning as Governor Marley from the first *Monkey Island* game!
ABOVE RIGHT: Here we see Mad Marty's Laundrette. That's Marty over there on the right. He's mad. On the left are our old friends, the Men Of Low Moral Fibre – once again demonstrating the concepts of existentialism and post-modern theatre by lazing around all day long. (Apparently it's symbolic of the state of modern man or something...)

MONKEY ISLAND 2 – LE CHUCK'S REVENGE

Publisher: US Gold
ETA: March/April

Briefly: The graphic adventure continues. LeChuck (the big bad guy from the first *Monkey Island* game) is back from the dead and he's out to put an end to Guybrush Threepwood's short (and not all that brilliant) career. This time the point-and-click parser control is taken one step further, and the humour level pushed right to the edge (and then over it). Get ready for a whole series of soon-to-be-classic scenes (the horribly fascinating gobbing competition springs to mind!) and the new, improved, bigger, better (etcetera) graphics.

Despite numerous improvements the game doesn't drastically alter the scenario or game style – emphasis is once again put firmly on developing a twisting-yet-logical plot and coming up with new *Monkey Island*-topping set pieces. With the bulk of ideas once again from the deranged mind of Lucasfilm stalwart Ron Gilbert, everything should be as infuriatingly cryptic and ribticklingly funny as before.

On the upside: *Monkey Island* was the game which could do no wrong, and it looks like this one's going to be even wilder. The PC version has just been released, instantly achieving classic status, and everyone expects the Amiga version to be just as impressive. This is probably the most eagerly awaited game of '92.

One the downside: There isn't one, unless you hated the original (shame on you).

What're its chances: A number one, no problem. This could be the most critically and commercially successful game of the year. (Certainly destined to be the funniest).

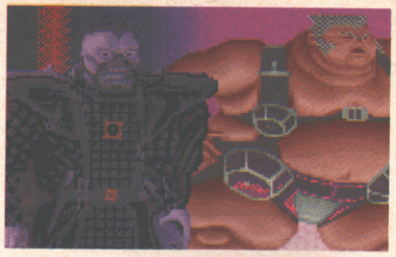
ADVANCED TACTICAL AIR COMMAND (ATAC)

Publisher: MicroProse
ETA: April

Briefly: MicroProse seem to be launching a one-company war against the drug barons this spring, with the destruction of smuggling operations being a major part of *Covert Action*, *Special Forces* and now *ATAC*. This one, set in the near future, sees the evil druggy kings of Colombia so powerful and wealthy that corruption and violence have become the norm in all major cities. The player is assigned the task of getting rid of them by the US Government – 250 undercover agents and a tactical force of four F-23 fighters being the tools for the job. (Oh yes, he gets to use a couple of helicopters from a secret base in Colombia too).
On the upside: Part flight simulation, part strategy game, the concept certainly sounds interesting, offering quite a challenge with its fully realized 3D world of jungle, mountains and cities. The fact that it's being programmed in the UK by Argonaut should ensure some pretty impressive 3D (if they manage to get the screen update a bit faster than on *Birds Of Prey*, that is!)
On the downside: How far is it possible to portray drug wars in black and white 'Miami Vice' fashion in a computer game? The concept sounds a bit too much like the pathetic US Gold/Epyx offering *Snow Strike* to us...
What're its chances: A big name programming team, a highly respected publisher – it's bound to be some sort of a success, though perhaps less so than some of MicroProse's more 'normal' simulations.

DUNE

Publisher: Virgin
ETA: April



***Dune* on the PC – Baron Harkonnen floats ominously in the background. It's atmospheric, certainly...**

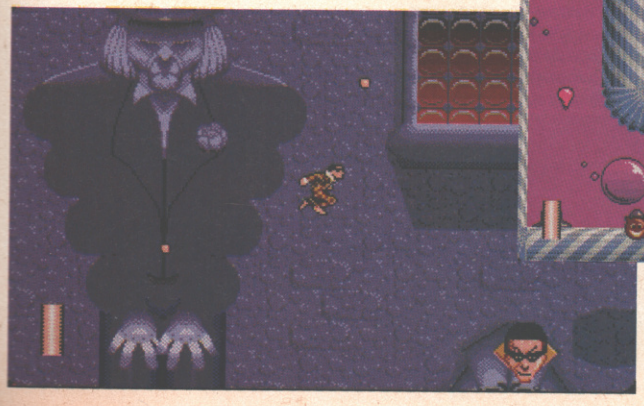
Briefly: The game of the film of the book, Virgin actually have two different teams of developers working on the *Dune* project (one in France, the other in America) with both intended for publication. Hard facts about either of them (and just how they differ in their approach) are a bit thin on the ground, but advance screen shots certainly capture that classic Dune look. Even with two games gobbling up material there's little shortage of spectacular incident to translate from the books – science fiction author Frank Herbert actually wrote five or six 400 page epics based around this classic tale of sandworms and spice-wars.
On the upside: The Frank Herbert stories certainly provide a good, solid starting point for the games, and the use of two entirely different programming teams ought to guarantee at least one hit.
On the downside: Nobody had a clue what was going on in the film, so to make the plot coherent in an Amiga game is going to take some doing. Dune is a complicated, easily-confusing story, and transferring it to other mediums has proved less than easy in the past...
What're its chances: If Virgin get this right it could just about match the hoopla that surrounded Melbourne House's release of *The Hobbit* game all those years ago. And – hey! – after the David Lynch film, it can't help but look good.

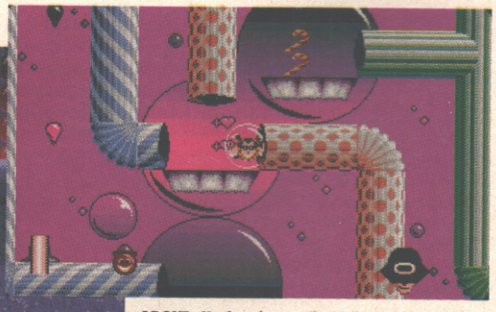
Highly stylised graphics give the world of Arakis a surreal style all of its own. Just how interactive these screens are, though, remains to be seen...

HARLEQUIN

Publisher: Gremlin
ETA: March

Briefly: With 23 huge levels of eight-way scrolling platform action, *Harlequin* is pitched at much the same market as *Robocod*. Arguably slicker, bigger and more playable than its rival, *Harlequin* simulates the Sega-style ultra-smooth console feel better than any other Amiga game.
On the upside: It's already generated an unprecedented level of anticipation in the AP office. Beautifully 'different' graphics, excellent sound, fluid control, and some neat sub-tasks are likely to make it gameplaying heaven.
On the downside: This kind of romp is always just a little unoriginal and repetitive, no matter how it's dressed up.
What're its chances: Could well be the game to steal the platform-adventure crown from the *Blues Brothers*.





ABOVE: *Harlequin* gets 'bubblised' in a special bonus level (the object of which is, well, to collect bonus points, basically).
LEFT: In the crypt our hero gets a helping hand from a giant undertaker – swinging right across the room on his giant arms.

B-17 Flying Fortress

Publisher: MicroProse
ETA: Spring

Briefly: Period flight sims are often just as interesting as modern day ones – if not more so – as *Their Finest Hour* and MicroProse's own *Knights Of The Sky* prove. This one's a simulation of daylight raids over occupied Europe by American crews during the Second World War. The player commands his *B-17 Flying Fortress* bomber through 25 hazardous combat missions – choosing a plane and crew, taking a mission briefing, reading intelligence reports and so on add to the complete WW2 experience. You can fly in any of the plane's various positions too – a computer controlled crewman fills in at any time when the human pilot fancies a go at tail gunning or whatever.
On the upside: Player control over the entire aircraft is certainly comprehensive, and we can expect the normal high standard of MicroProse 3D. An interesting specialist idea along the lines of the film Memphis Belle, it's bound to be a hit with fans of *Knights* and other 'vintage' style flight sims.
On the downside: How long will the Amiga player be entertained by such restricted subject matter? Most bombing missions are just a case of flying in a straight line there and back, aren't they?
What're its chances: 'Period' flight sims are hot at the moment and – hey! – it's bound to be a bit more thrilling than *Shuttle* (isn't it?)

MATRIX CUBED

Publisher: US Gold
ETA: March

Briefly: Continuing SSI's other fantasy role playing game world, *Matrix Cubed* takes the Buck Rogers theme and builds a sci-fi world of exploration and combat. Following on from *Countdown To Doomsday*, *Matrix Cubed* promises a bigger universe, and about twice as many monsters to beat up.
On the upside: The Buck Rogers name is familiar to everyone, so there's no worry of it being a low profile game. 25th century role-playing offers a refreshing change from the usual tired fantasy scenarios.
On the downside: It lacks the sexy presentation of the *Beholder* games, and *Countdown To Doomsday* was only moderately successful. Likely to be one of SSI's more workaday products.
What're its chances: This one is unlikely to appeal to the →

PARASOL STARS

Publisher: Ocean
ETA: Easter

Briefly: Bub'n'Bob, stars of *Bubble Bobble* and *Rainbow Islands*, are back!
On the upside: Both previous games feature highly in the AMIGA POWER All-time Top 100 games – *Rainbow Islands* at No.1! – and, unlike many in this Ultimate Spring Preview, it's actually in an almost-finished, playable state already. That being the case we can safely comment that yes, the game is excellent, as expected. Initial impressions suggest it'll play very much like a cross between its parents – the small playing areas of *Bubble Bobble* with the characters and weaponry of *Rainbow Islands*. With better graphics than either, and gameplay a finely honed progression over two previous world-beaters, this will be one of 1992's great games, guaranteed.
On the downside: There isn't really a downside.
What're its chances: Very strong indeed. The new AMIGA POWER No.1 game, perhaps?

ABOVE: Bub (or is it Bob?) doesn't meet the organ grinder, but *does* come across the organ itself. What's going on?
BELOW: A veritable rainbow of colour and cartoonery, it's not too hard to spot *Parasol Stars*' origins.

average games player, despite its pedigree. (The more FRP-orientated types should lap it up though).

SPACE GUN
Publisher: Ocean
ETA: Early 1992

Briefly: Inexplicably popular coin-op – best described as *Line Of Fire* set in space – brought to the Amiga. One of the new season's more bread-and-butter, nothing-spectacular-about-this-one releases.
On the upside: Ocean have done enough of these *Operation Wolf* style blasters (well, three actually) to know exactly what they're doing.
On the downside: But do we really need another one? (Especially when the arcade original was as so-so as the one here).
What're its chances: Boringly average, much like the game.

CAMPAIGN
Publisher: Empire
ETA: April

Briefly: We're into serious wargame territory here. It's World War 2, you're a general, and, well, you can guess the rest.
On the upside: Virtually every aspect of the war in Europe (and beyond) is covered, with options to fight in theatres ranging from Italy to the Sahara, Germany, Poland and so on. With pretty much every aspect of the campaigns simulated, it's nothing if not comprehensive...
On the downside: Can wargames really be made appealing to Joe Public? We've got our doubts...
What're its chances: If *Campaign* does outstandingly well it'll be a real marketing triumph for Empire. Otherwise, expect consistent but unspectacular sales.

ORK
Publisher: Psygnosis
ETA: February

Briefly: Pitched as 'the thinking man's platform game', *Ork*'s programmers were responsible for the fair-to-middling *Anarchy* and *Baal*. With visual similarities to both *The Killing Game Show* and →

HOOK

Publisher: Ocean
ETA: Easter, to tie in with the cinema release of the much-hyped movie

Hoffman shows an unimpressed Williams his point. (Let's hope Ocean put the *Terminator 2* fiasco behind them, and make amends with *Hook*).

Briefly: Dustin Hoffman, Robin Williams, Julia Roberts, Bob Hoskins, Steven Spielberg – with a line-up like that, it's little wonder that this giant-scale and super-expensive movie is being touted as 1992's answer to Batman. Few shocks that Ocean have the licence either – not since their 1989 megahit with the bat-guy has there been a licenced property so itching for the all-stops-pulled-out computer game treatment. Little news as to what the game's actually going to be like yet though...
On the upside: Ocean's been building up its in-house programming team over the last year or so, and it's beginning to turn out some pretty excellent stuff. Their speciality seems to be console-style platform games, a style which sounds like it would suit the *Hook* property down to the ground. Note, also, that for Ocean this'll be the real biggie of the first half of the year – perhaps the entire year. They simply can't afford to fluff it.
On the down side: Well, there is the recent string of *Darkman/Navy SEALs/Terminator 2* games to think of – a pretty atrocious recent track record. There doesn't seem to be much time between now and the proposed release date to get six computer formats plus consoles into a suitable state (and the movie's cinema performance in the states hasn't been up to expectations either...)
What're its chances: You're joking, aren't you..? Barring something-going-horribly-wrong, absolutely cast iron excellent.

VROOM

Publisher: Ubi Soft
ETA: February

Briefly: If you're into arcade-style motor racing this promises to be just your thing – very fast, offering great sound effects and bags of action. It's an arcade Formula One race simulation, built up of competition levels on six different international circuits, with plenty of practice lap and qualifying round options to help you get into it. The competition mode will be operated with a joystick and the rest of the game with the mouse, while two machines can be connected via local mode or modem mode for two player racing. Lankhor have also developed a disk with six new race circuits for the Amiga.
On the upside: Simple but suitably fast graphics (particularly the impressive 3D perspective of the race track) and realistic sound effects make this one very eagerly awaited game. The ST version (already available) is excellent – the missing link between *Lotus II* and *Formula One GP*.
On the downside: Two modes – arcade-style (allowing joystick use) and 'serious' mode (mouse only) – can get confusing, especially if you've been playing with one control method, then find yourself forced to learn the other to try the second option.
What're its chances: Driving games are at a popularity peak at the moment, so chances are it'll be another hit for Ubi Soft. Remember, though, that it's pitching itself against some very serious competition indeed...

SIM ANT

Publisher: Ocean
ETA: Easter

Briefly: It's *Sim City* with ants! Nothing like the impressive-but-too-complicated-to-really-understand disaster of the problematic *Sim Earth*, *Sim Ant* proves to be an accessible, well, *game*. Visually it's nothing to write home about (on the existing Macintosh version at any rate), but the much simpler gameplay – based, unsurprisingly, on life in an ant hill – could prove to be a surprise hit amongst more cerebral Amiga gameplayers.
On the upside: Programming team Maxis' reputation, and the reasonable success of existing versions of *Sim Ant* abroad, make for much eager hand rubbing amongst the *Sim City* fans in the AMIGA POWER offices, of which there are quite a few...
On the downside: Are ants really interesting enough to sustain a whole game? And might Maxis' tendency to push things as far as they will go end up with something as off-puttingly involved as *Sim Earth*? It's possible, though happily early reports say not...
What're its chances: Our prediction: sleeper hit of the year.

THE CHAOS ENGINE

Publisher: Renegade
ETA: Easter

Briefly: The Bitmap Brothers try their hand at *Gauntlet* (with knobs on).
On the upside: The usual spectacular graphics/sound combination we've come to expect of The Bitmap Brothers; some clever 'artificial intelligence'/ character generation routines; more visual originality than recent Bitmap projects; the generally held belief that though they've perhaps been through a bit of a weak patch, the Bitmaps are going to bounce back with something spectacular any day now...
On the downside: Nobody believes the Bitmaps are infallible anymore...
What're its chances: A big seller, there's no doubt about it...

THE ADDAMS FAMILY

Publisher: Ocean
ETA: Most likely May to tie in with the movie's video release, though earlier is still possible.

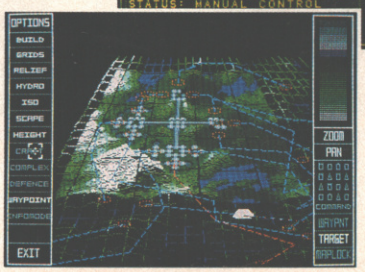
Fresh from (perhaps surprising) movie success, The Addams Family and their wonderfully creepy brand of humour are soon to hit the Amiga, courtesy of Ocean.

Briefly: The film's been a big US cinema hit, and though the jury's still out on the UK box office performance, it's clear that this all-star remake of the cult 60s TV show will do good business down the video shops – little surprise that Ocean are intending to tie the game version in with the vid release. This one they're doing across every format possible – all the home computers plus the full range of Nintendo consoles – so an involved platform game style should prove no surprise. "There'll be lots of secret rooms and things to discover in it, not unlike *Rainbow Islands*," say Ocean.
On the upside: Unlike many films, it's easy to see how this will work as a computer game – the rambling Addams mansion, the assortment of weird characters, the basic plot (such as it is). Generally, Ocean seem more confident about this game than they have about anything in quite a while...
On the downside: The rather non-existent storyline of the movie aside, it's hard to see much going wrong, though the sort of gameplay mistakes that (slightly) spoiled the otherwise solid *Hudson Hawk* could conspire to make it only a *good* game, rather than a great one...
What're its chances: Excellent.

AIR SUPPORT

Publisher: Psygnosis
ETA: March

Briefly: Psygnosis return to futuristic 3D territory with another vector-based strategy-action affair. As in *Armour-Geddon*, the player is given control of numerous armoured vehicles, with training missions and full campaigns to take part in. The vectors look strangely dated, being wire-frame rather than solid. Given Psygnosis' usual technical excellence, this would seem to indicate that a) the graphics will be very fast, and b) that the actually gameplay will make up for any lack of visual appeal.
On the upside: The long-term nature of the gameplay is promising, adding an extra dimension, rather than the usual half-hearted stab at mixing strategy with an action game.
On the downside: Will anybody put up with such ropey visuals, even if there's substance to the game?
What're its chances: Despite Psygnosis' chart success lying with more commercial outings (*Lemmings* etc), they often seem at their best with the more eclectic stuff. *Air Support* could be a real-long term winner.



Wire-frame vectors make a comeback in *Air Support*. Will the gameplay make up for the retro graphics?

Leander, Ork is very much a typical Psygnosis game.
On the upside: The masters of slickness are unlikely to make any big mistakes with such a well tried formula as this.
On the downside: Let's just hope they can inject enough fresh ideas to make it worthwile.
What're its chances: As good as *Leander* et al.

SHUTTLE

Publisher: Virgin
ETA: January

Briefly: Virgin's new flight-and-orbit simulator aims to get one up on the rest by quite literally taking things out of this world. Solid 3D graphics and authentic mathematics – though who are we to check? – are used to present a techie game with high visual appeal. Tasks like deploying and repairing satellites, launching spy satellites, and 'SDI missions' make sure there's actually something to do once you're up there.
On the upside: Destined to be the best in its field (because it's the only one – or, at least, the only one of any significance). Programmers Vector Grafix are old masters at solid 3D games, and the idea of piloting a shuttle is a pretty appealing one to many a budding astronaut.
On the downside: Erm, if there are any left, that is. Isn't the reality of space flight a bit too ordinary and workaday for anybody to get excited about anymore? The danger is that the game is going to be impressive but not actually that much fun to play. (After all, there's nothing to shoot). It's likely to be bloody expensive too.
What're its chances: While it's unlikely to do as well as the likes of *F-15 Strike Eagle II*, this is the kind of big, bold game that will appeal to the real simulation fans out there (the people who buy games about submarines and so on). Shelf life is likely to be phenomenal too.

5 GAME PACK
DIZZY COLLECTION

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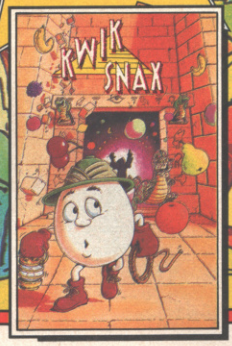
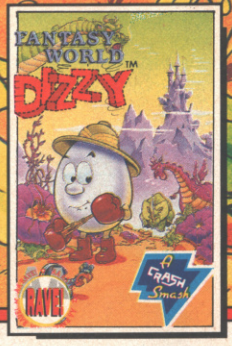


"It's spookily addictive and it's fantastically presented" - Rich Pelley Future Publishing

Dizzy's Treasure Island is brilliant, it's like a real cartoon with amazing gameplay!!



"Mindblowingly addictive and truly great!" - Brian Sharp Games X Magazine

"A Sure Fire winner for the Codies. A SMASH!" Amiga Format

"Fast Food is a classic game Absolutely brilliant" ZZap Magazine

Code Masters

CODEMASTERS

AMIGA screen shots shown. 8-bit versions feature "DIZZY" instead of "KWIK SNAX"

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ATARI ST AND AMIGA

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ROCKSTAR	0898 555 090
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SLIGHTLY MAGIC	0898 555 050
SEYMOUR IN HOLLYWOOD	0898 555 010
SPIKE IN TRANSYLVANIA	0898 555 105

BAT 2

Publisher: Ubi Soft
ETA: March

Briefly: Part two of the *BAT* saga features more than 200 screens, a new 'atmospheric' sound system, four flight simulators and street fighting confrontations where either strategy or arcade options are available. The scenario follows the same Blade Runner-style route as in the first *BAT*, with the promise of controlling up to four other people, sending them on missions to help the central character.
On the upside: The French sci-fi graphic style has been refined even further to make the planet Roma 2 look suitably functional in a seedy sort of way. As in the original *BAT* there's good, effective use of icons throughout. Ubi Soft's recent performance – particularly with *Battle Isle* and *Celtic Legends* – proves them to be a top quality developer after all.
On the downside: It does sound promising, and the PC version certainly looks good, but how well it translates onto the Amiga remains to be seen. Including so many subgames is a bit of a risk, too. The game may fail to link together to form a cohesive whole.
What're its chances: The first *BAT* was pretty impressive (and underrated) affair. If Ubi Soft get the formula right for this new improved version, then it could reach a much wider audience.

Yes, these are actually Amiga graphics! Just soak in all those colours..!

LEFT: Here's a shot of the title screen, simply because it looks good. Let's hope the game matches up to the graphics.
BELOW: Meet Mort. Can you guess what his role in *BAT 2* is?

EPIC

Publisher: Ocean
ETA: February 1992

Briefly: Long awaited 3D space (ahem) 'epic', like a cross between top PC game *Wing Commander* and Ocean's own *F-29 Retaliator*. Lots of shoot-'em-uppy flight sim action unhindered by the need to be realistic (the whole game being set in space and everything), and a most spectacular Star Wars influenced intro sequence.
On the upside: Programmers DiD did an excellent job of the essentially similar *F-29* (if you're unconcerned about the concept of realism in your flight sims, that is), while their *RoboCop 3* (reviewed this issue) broke new ground in the movie game field. There seems little reason to suspect that this'll be any less spectacular. The buzz about the project is generally good.
On the downside: Well, it has taken an awfully long time. And *F-29* did go out bugged. Could this have similar problems?
What're its chances: Promises to be Ocean's first completely original 16-bit hit in ages.

SAMURAI – THE WAY OF THE WARRIOR

Publisher: Impressions
ETA: April

Introducing the 3D hex-map!

Briefly: Ever wanted to lead a band of Samurai Warriors in a quest to win back land stolen from your father who was murdered in an invasion by the greedy baddie Obinaka? Oh good, then you've come to the right place. Built up of both strategic planning and man-to-man fighting, the bulk of the game is concerned with financing armies, rounding-up reinforcements and finding the best place to break your opponent's defences.
On the upside: Graphic standards are above average for a board/strategy/war game, and presentation between screens is rather nifty too. With a wide variety of well animated warriors to be moved around and an impressively large play area, it promises to be one of Impressions' best offerings yet.
On the downside: Historic war games have been let down in the past by over-complex combat systems and sloppy programming. Can we expect to see too much of a change here?
What're its chances: A slow burner, but the evergreen samurai theme and 100 percent strategy nature should see it do good business with fans of the genre.

FLOOR 13

Publisher: Virgin
ETA: January

Briefly: Political intrigue, skullduggery and backstabbing come to the Amiga in this unusual conspiracy theory drama. Much like Edge Of Darkness, Bird Of Prey or other expensive TV dramas where nothing is quite what it seems, and the British Government is shown to be a web of corruption and secret agendas, this puts you in control of a 'non-existent' organisation that operates behind the visible mechanisms of power. Subversion is the name of the business – and business is good. Drawing from a rich British tradition of secrecy and scandal, *Floor 13* offers unique opportunities to execute smear campaigns, cover ups, and eliminations – all in the name of national security. *Floor 13* is destined to appeal to morally bankrupt gamers everywhere.
On the upside: The concept is a stroke of genius – who wouldn't relish the chance to play a powerful (and completely corrupt) civil servant? Future data disks should ensure topicality too.
On the downside: A grand concept, but these things aren't so easy to pull off, particularly on a humble Amiga. Do the writers really know enough about the machinations of power to do a decent job? And won't such a politically-based game style turn out to be visually lacking?
What're its chances: The secret to its success will lie in its execution (pun fully intended). Reviews of the PC version have been mixed. A great idea, but let's just hope the Amiga version lives up to expectations.

BOB

Publisher: Bullfrog/Electronic Arts
ETA: Late May

Briefly: Bullfrog do a business simulator! Don't go away →

though – it also combines a massive futuristic James Bond element, as you control a handful of semi-reliable superhuman agents running around a 3D isometric world, interacting with the cars, buildings and people they meet there. Imagine a cross between *Populous*, *Covert Action*, *Sim City* and quite a lot of other things we can't think of just now – then forget them all because, quite simply, you haven't seen anything like this before.

On the upside: Typically original, groundbreaking, never-before-seen stuff from Bullfrog. *Populous* fans will like the fact they're zooming much closer in on the world, reproducing fewer but much more complex individuals. "It's a lot harder to simulate the behaviour of a single character than an entire race," says Bullfrog leader Peter Molyneux.

On the downside: It's one of those projects that takes some getting your mind around – will your average gameplayer really go for something that includes elements of business sims? The jury's out on this one...

What're its chances: It'll be interesting to see...

VENGEANCE OF EXCALIBUR

Publisher: Virgin
ETA: January

Briefly: The follow-up to the moderately successful *Spirit Of Excalibur* continues the crossover of arcade and fantasy role playing styles. Still based around the Arthurian legends, *Vengeance* centres on the villainous Shadowmaster, who has imprisoned the king and fled to Spain. The story once again involves controlling your forces via a map, then zooming into scene level where searches, conversations and inevitable fights take place.

On the upside: The Arthurian legend provides a rich background for a computer game. Great for those who enjoyed the first one – they get more of the same, but with the added attraction of more exotic locations and weirder characters to talk to/kill.

On the downside: The original *Excalibur* game was just too big and slow, with disk accesses taking up most of the play time. Action was pretty uninvolving, too. Unless the programmers make some pretty big improvements to the basic game engine, *Vengeance* is likely to receive a similar critical lack of interest.

What're its chances: The fashionable role-playing angle ought to guarantee a few sales, but →

EYE OF THE BEHOLDER 2: THE LEGEND OF DARKMOON

Publisher: US Gold
ETA: March

Let's hope the Amiga version's graphics match up to the lush PC ones (pictured).

Briefly: Continuing the Dungeons & Dragons-based *Beholder* series, this is perhaps the most eagerly-awaited FRP game of the next twelve months. This time the characters and monsters are all much more powerful (though you can use the ones you built up in the original), with the weapons and spells used by both sides much stronger. The level of character interaction has been increased, and the map takes the game into the woods, down into catacombs and right up into danger-filled towers (the original game confined itself to the underground). Better graphics and more carefully designed locations and problems are the most important improvements of this sequel.

On the upside: The original was the first post-*Dungeon Master* fantasy game to gain widespread acceptance (the number of *Beholder*-inspired games due for release is testimony to its success), and the second in the series doesn't mess around with the winning formula.

On the downside: Programmers SSI have perhaps played a little too safe. More advances in the 3D system and a communication option would have widened the scope of it no end.

What're its chances: US Gold and SSI know what they're doing with this one. It might not have the impact of the first game, but it'll sell even more.

LEFT: As you can see, the monsters encountered in *EOB 2* are far meaner and harder than in the first game. It's just as well that the player characters are more powerful too, really.

SIM EARTH

Publisher: Ocean
ETA: February

Briefly: From single cell beginnings to the complicated machinations of mankind, *Sim Earth* is a point-and-click journey through the living history of the planet, putting you in the role of a god far more thoroughly than any existing so-called god sim. Incredibly ambitious and, well, *big*, but there are problems with the concept...

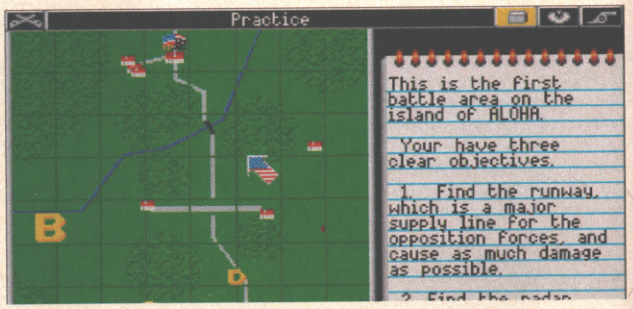
On the upside: The ambition and sheer prestige of the project have to make it one of the year's biggest releases, and the PC version has caused quite a stir among the older, more strategy-based gaming fraternity.

On the downside: Unfortunately, it's also proved to be a bit of a disaster as a game. You need an awful lot of time to really get into it, for a start – none of the AMIGA POWER team have got anywhere, and few seem inclined to keep trying – and disturbing reports from those who have would indicate that perhaps it wasn't worth the effort. Very much a specialist taste then. Development of the Amiga version has now reverted to original creators Maxis – Probe, who'd been given the job, apparently proving unable to cope.

What're its chances: A 'game' with a long shelf life certainly, but we doubt the Amiga versions will break any records sales-wise.

PACIFIC ISLANDS

Publisher: Empire
ETA: March



Strategy, careful planning and lots of tanks – it's Empire's *Pacific Islands*.

Briefly: Or *Team Yankee II* to its friends, this new game expands the concept of Empire's first (and well received) tank sim, this time placing the action on a series of (you guess it it) 'Pacific Islands'. Unlike in the first game, ships and planes turn up occasionally, but you never get to directly control them. We're still talking tanks here...

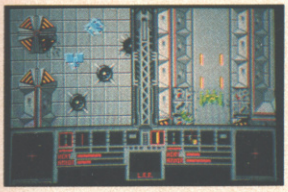
On the upside: Many more scenarios (there are 45 different missions!) and increased interaction with the world outside your tank add to an essentially successful formula. If you liked *Team Yankee*, chances are you'll go a bundle on this.

On the downside: Aren't tank sims a little bit boring? Non-fans of the genre are unlikley to be converted.

What're its chances: *Team Yankee* was one of Empire's biggest hits, so doing a sequel seems like a pretty good idea, doesn't it..?

STEEL EMPIRE

Publisher: Millennium
ETA: February



Future-war strategy gaming gets a thoroughly modern look in Millennium's *Steel Empire*.

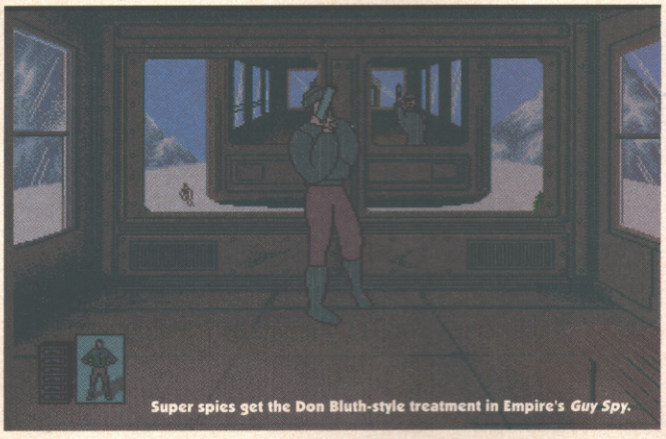
Briefly: Millennium enter the strategy arena with a cyborg-filled tale of world domination. Using accepted wargaming techniques with real time combat and slicker graphics, *Steel Empire* seems aimed more at the regular Amiga gamer than the hardcore strategist.
On the upside: The likes of *Battle Isle* have finally broken through into the mainstream Amiga market, giving *Steel Empire* a real chance of success. The graphics are certainly well above part for this sort of thing, and what the scenario lacks in originality it makes up for in coherency.
On the dowside: Crossovers are always a bit of a risk, and there's the possibility that by attempting to satisfy all, it will appeal to no one.
What're its chances: As good as *Battle Isle*'s, basically.

GUY SPY

Publisher: Readysoft (Empire)
ETA: March

***Guy Spy* – great graphics, fingers crossed for a good game this time.**

Briefly: Don Bluth-style graphics used to illustrate something approaching a 'proper' game. *Guy Spy* uses similar animation to *Dragon's Lair*, *Space Ace* et al, but while movement still isn't anywhere near as free as in your average sprite-based game, you are allowed to execute a number of different moves, something lacking from the discover-the-pre-set pattern format of yer average Bluth game. Plot is very much your James Bond super-spy type thing, never done particularly well on the Amiga for some reason.
On the upside: It'll look gorgeous in the magazines.
On the downside: Unfortunately it remains to be seen if things go far enough to turn proceedings into a worthwhile game. The much-more-interactive-and-just-as pretty *Another World* (reviewed this issue) rather spoils its impact somewhat.
What're its chances: Fair to middling.

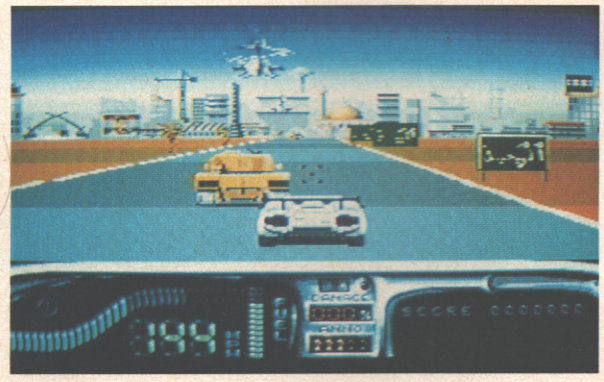


Super spies get the Don Bluth-style treatment in Empire's *Guy Spy*.

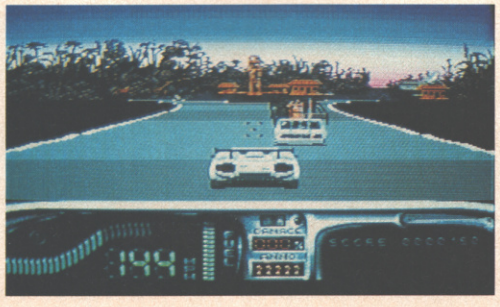
TURBOCHARGE

Publisher: System 3
ETA: April

Briefly: System 3's C64 hit racing game gets upgraded to the Amiga, with improvements all round. A shoot-'em-up element is added to a fast arcade-style racer, a la *Roadblasters* and *Overlander*.
On the upside: Impressively speedy 3D effect, and Amiga owners still await a decent driving and shooting game.
On the downside: Conversions of C64 games are usually rather pitiful, and despite the addition of a blasting element, comparisons with *Lotus 2* are inevitable.
What're its chances: It looks promising so far, but we suspect that both aspects of the gameplay will need further development to bring it up to Amiga standards. Let's hope System 3 do the business.



Taking its cue from *Roadblasters*, *Turbocharge* combines combat and driving.



Vengeance looks unlikely to break any new ground.

SILLY PUTTY

Publisher: System 3
ETA: May

Briefly: A suitably daft plot has the player controlling a malleable blob, ensuring the smooth construction of a skyscraper takes place. Tasks include preventing solar-powered robots from making suicide jumps, thus ensuring that they continue building the 'scraper. This scenario forms the basis for a weird and wild platformer, with cute graphics and a wonderfully pliable central character.
On the upside: Cute platform romps are always welcome, and the surreal edge to *Silly Putty* ought to provide it with enough originality to make it desirable.
On the downside: System 3 failed to playtest their *Fuzzball* sufficiently, the result being an overly frustrating platform game. Let's hope they don't make the same mistake with *Silly Putty*.
What're its chances: It's certainly had a big enough build-up, so the end result will either be a very big hit, or a monumental anti-climax.

MATCH OF THE DAY

Publisher: Impulze
ETA: March

Briefly: One of the few remaining footy licences, this one actually concentrates more on the strategy side of running a show than footy itself. With the inclusion of 'top presenters' and a scenario which focuses on the media side of things, Impulze are bound to aim for a less than serious approach.
On the upside: If the TV is sufficiently lampooned, then *Match Of The Day* may well turn out to be a fun slice of strategy management.
On the downside: Anybody →

who has played *Rock Star Ate My Hamster* knows just how bad these things can be.
What're its chances: Despite the big(ish) name licence, no better or worse than any other footy management game.

INDIANA JONES & THE FATE OF ATLANTIS

Publisher: US Gold
ETA: April

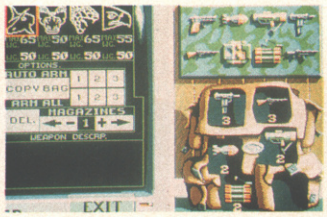
Briefly: Unhindered by the need to closely follow the plot of any film, this one tops even the outlandish plot of *The Last Crusade*. Nazi spies, submarines, and a heroine called Sophia Hapgood are all thrown into the melting pot, and the result is as certainly as outlandish as any of the Spielberg/Lucas film adventures.
On the upside: The character of Indy Jones shines through from the opening scene – even the Indy humour is in there. Using a similar game system to *Monkey Island 2*, but with the addition of action sequences (controlling a hot air balloon, steering a submarine etc) and using more 'realistic' graphics, *Indy Jones* represents the current state-of-the-art for graphic adventures. The previous *Indy* adventure game is a firm AP fave.
On the downside: If the action sequences aren't implemented well they could be game's undoing. Mixing action with adventure has never been done successfully.
What're its chances: Massive. Indy is still a very popular character, the game is eagerly awaited by discerning adventure fans, and Lucasfilm couldn't get low sales on it if they tried.

SPECIAL FORCES

Publisher: MicroProse
ETA: February

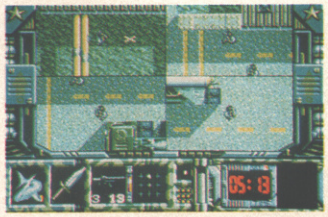
MicroProse once again take a break from flight sims for a bit of strategy.

Briefly: It sounds a bit like an A-Team adventure, set, as it is, amongst plenty of terrorist incidents, drug deals and military junta takeovers. To restore order the government has decided to send in a Special Forces unit of four elite soldiers to rid the world of this evil in typical SAS style (or something). There are 16 strategic missions set in Arctic, Desert, Temperate and Tropical game worlds, with you taking the role of team leader, in this ambitious top-down view strategy/action offering.
On the upside: Graphically it looks superb, while plenty of options allow you to plan your tactics against fast thinking enemies. If necessary your force can be divided up into sub teams to allow the sort of tactics only smaller units are capable of. For a game high in strategy it all looks surprisingly easy to get the hang of and – yes – sexy.



***Special Forces* – as much depth as you'd expect from MicroProse.**

On the downside: Each of the missions is linked, with success or failure in any one related to your ability to try your hand at the next. Potentially frustrating? Well, maybe. MicroProse aren't at their best with arcade-style stuff either.
What're its chances: With so many strategy/action titles on the market it's difficult to see what makes this one particularly special, but MicroProse haven't produced a bad title in donkey's years.



***Covert Action* was a firm AP fave – let's hope *Special Forces* matches up.**

AGONY

Publisher: Psygnosis
ETA: February

Briefly: The programming team behind *Unreal* are aiming to give the scrolling shoot-'em-up a respray, using the trademark Psygnosis parallax scrolling and subdued colour schemes.
On the upside: Probably the most serenely-beautiful computer game we've ever seen.
On the downside: Can a game with such impossibly-nice graphics and technical excellence possibly be any good? History indicates not (witness *Space Ace 2* et al).
What're its chances: As with any shoot-'em-up, only extensive blasting will provide the answer, though Psygnosis are unlikely to cock-up to any great extent.

'Experience *Agony* without pain' say Psygnosis. Erm, quite.

CONAN THE CIMMERIAN

Publisher: Virgin
ETA: January

Conan's girlie gets fried, causing him to go just a little mad. Conan the jolly friendly family man is dead – long live heroic *Conan The Cimmerian*!

Briefly: Everyone's favourite bonehead (Arnie excepted) finally gets the computer treatment with a game which actually manages to stay remarkably closely to Robert E Howard's original vision of the archetypal barbarian. Using a similar game system to the *Excalibur* tales, *Conan* adds a forced perspective scrolling city section, immediately making things much more heavily arcade orientated. Covering 600 screens and over two hundred locations, the game revolves around Conan's efforts to defeat arch-priest Thoth Amon and the followers of Set. Mixing sword fights with maze exploration, limited character interaction and object manipulation, *Conan The Cimmerian* is aimed squarely at the arcade fraternity, despite its FRP undertones.
On the upside: The chance to take on the role of Conan is enough to convince many, and the joystick-friendly control ought to make it an easy ride into fantasy land.
On the downside: The PC versions suffered from problems in the control system which rendered things just too frustrating, and the three different graphical views (map, side-on and forced perspective 3D) didn't really gel properly. The Amiga version could well end up the same, with great intentions and ideas bogged down by messy execution.
What're its chances: Let's hope the programmers can clean up the dodgy areas. If these bugbears are sorted the result could be damned impressive.

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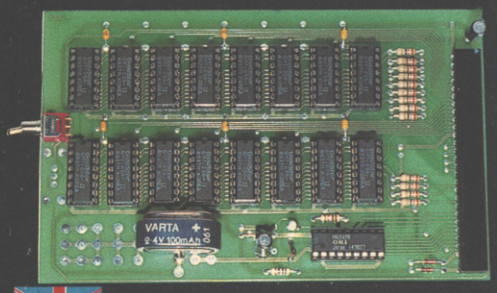

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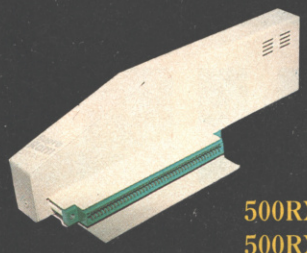

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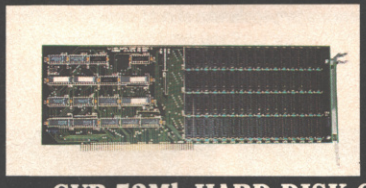

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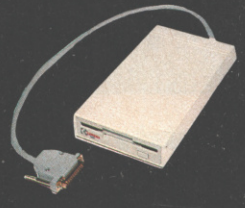

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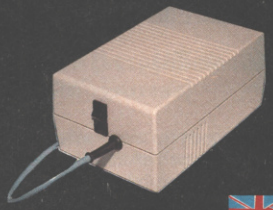

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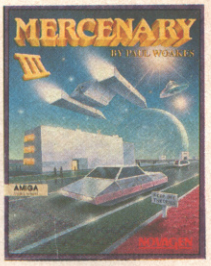
MICROPROSE GOLF (MicroProse)
PGA TOUR GOLF (Electronic Arts)

Here we start with a potentially fairly boring looking (or at least serious) subject matter – and two excellent games by the way – but which one would you buy? Neither company has taken too much effort, it has to be said – just a quick flick through a photo library catalogue and a quick slap of text on top – but the results are very different. MicroProse might have some problems with their disappearing green text, but the strength of the image more than makes up for it. EA, meanwhile, have gone for just about the dullest medium long shot imaginable – who really wants to look at the back of a lot of strangers' heads? There's nothing here to stimulate the imagination at all...



SUPREMACY (Virgin)
MERCENARY III (Novagen)

These sort of epic space thingies are always hard to illustrate, as Novagen very ably prove with their pathetic attempt at depicting *Mercenary III*. Dull, washed out colours and ugly lettering aside, what does a space ship, a house, a car and a 'Keep Off The Grass' sign tell you about the game? Nothing is what, and that's ignoring the composition that looks like it's been drawn by someone who just discovered the concept of perspective. *Supremacy*, on the other hand, features some strong figure work (always eye catching) in a nice comic book style, the imagery not really telling you anything specific about the game, but neatly capturing its epic intent. A bit too dark perhaps, but it works.

The best and worst in computer game packaging design, as selected by Matt

The boxes? They're not really that important, are they? Well, just think for a minute. What's the first thing you see of any particular game when you walk in the shop? It's the packaging, isn't it, and we all know how important first impressions are. In theory, a distinctive, eye catching box makes you look at a game, and once you're looking you're that much more likely to buy. And even if you already know a good deal about a game before you ever set foot in a shop – you read the magazines, say – you at least want to be able to find the blooming thing. If what you see on the shelves bears absolutely no relation to your existing impressions of the game, chances are you'll walk straight past it.

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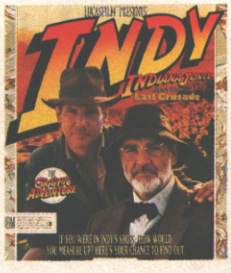
With that in mind we've taken a fairly subjective look at the good and bad in computer game box design. The brief was simple – choose some covers that we like and pair them with an example of how *not* to do it. The choice here was depressingly wide, but we've tried by and large not to go for the easy targets – most of the monstrosities here are by people who should know better. The good covers are on the left of each pair, by the way, but if you need us to tell you that we may as well go home right now...

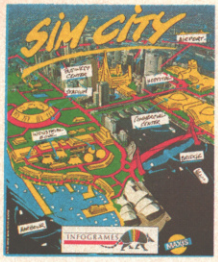
LOTUS TURBO CHALLENGE II (Gremlin)
CHAMPION DRIVER (Idea)

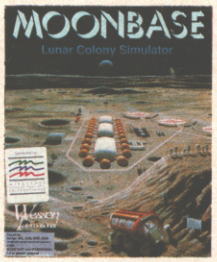
Okay, it's simple, but – hey! – it's still one of the strongest bits of packaging of the year. We're talking *Lotus II*, of course – a box to stand out on the shelves and shout 'Buy me!'. You're right, it looks like it was a piece of the proverbial to do, but – hey! – let's not hold that against it. It all works, from the single strong image to the clever use of colour, and most importantly, it's immediately recognisable as the new *Lotus* game. Neato. Choosing a bad example of a racing game to set next to it was tricky – too many to chose from – but in the end we went for this rather too arty offering from Italian software house Idea. Those are meant to be cars, are they? This sort of stylised pseudo-cubist approach might be interesting in an art gallery, but as a way of selling a game it's laughable.



INDIANA JONES AND THE LAST CRUSADE (Lucasfilm)
THE NEVERENDING STORY II (Linel)

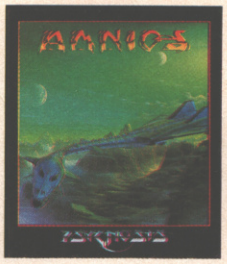
Film games are a gift, packaging wise – you get to use the great image provided by the movie company which has a) a strong recognition factor and b) is almost certainly better than anything you as a software house could come up with. That said then, why does everyone keep mucking it up? Lucasfilm don't though – the classy marbled border marking the game immediately as one of theirs, while the bold use of the logo and the two big stars staring out at you hold the attention. Compare it to *The Neverending Story II* (a much less sexy film, admittedly). The point is, what this manages to do – with its bitty (if well executed) artwork – is make the game look exactly the same as any other sword and sorcery adventure, negating the impact of the film tie-in almost immediately. Silly.





SIM CITY (Infogrames)
MOONBASE (Wesson International/Mindscape)

Sim City is, quite simply, a classic within the limited field of computer game packaging. The strong view of a classic sea side city – the extremely photogenic Sydney – overlaid with brightly coloured, cartoon-like, town planning ideas works a treat, making a potentially dull subject matter look bright and exciting. The confident hand-written logo helps too. To see just how dull this could have been though, check out the terminally boring *Moonbase* box next to it. A similar community management game, it will have started from the same brief, but this dark, featureless and unimaginative depiction of a very uninspiring lunar colony does the game no favours. You'd walk straight past it.

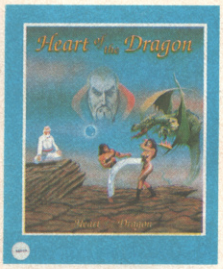


XENON 2 (Image Works)
AMNIOS (Psygnosis)

An all time classic box for this famous Bitmap Brothers shoot-'em-up. No, we've no real idea what a digitally separated angler fish (or whatever it is) has to do with an outer-space blaster either, but it's an exceedingly powerful image. The highly stylised lettering is effective too – if a little 1985 – while the subtitle 'Megablast' gives us some idea of what the game's about. It was hard to know what to couple this with until we spotted the *Amnios* box, featuring another futuristic fish-like thing and holding a very similar game. So why doesn't *Amnios* work – after all, the actual artwork is of an incredibly high standard. Well, can you tell it from any other Psygnosis box you've ever seen? We didn't think so...

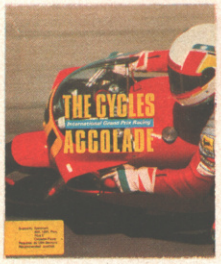
Bielby and Amanda Cook

GOOD, BAD & UGLY



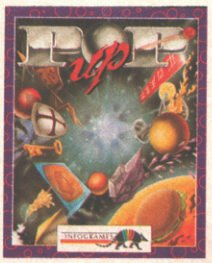
IVANHOE (Ocean)
HEART OF THE DRAGON (Avatar Consulting)

Ocean boxes are always at least good, often spectacular, and much of it is down to their consistent use of the same artist – one Bob Wakelin – who shows an impressive ability to modify his style to suit most every subject matter. Here we've chosen one of his less well-known efforts – *Ivanhoe* – and compared it to the not dissimilar *Heart Of The Dragon*. In fact, the images presented are almost disconcertingly alike. Both feature a central hero menaced on three sides by a warrior, a mysterious magic user and a dragon. Wakelin is twice the artist of his nameless rival, but it's the tightness of the composition that makes the difference. His people are larger, his images overlap – this is how to do it, alright.



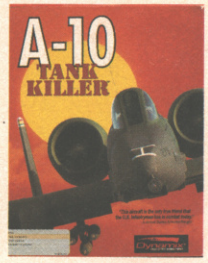
THE CYCLES (Accolade)
INDIANAPOLIS 500 (Electronic Arts)

Two racing games, both from US software houses and aiming at the more serious sim end of the market, but from these boxes you'd never guess which was the better game. Accolade, with a typical eye for a strong image, get everything right. A tightly cropped photo of a racing motorbike in full flight, strong and legible lettering and the sheer gall to scream the name of the software house as loud as that of the game – it's all here. EA come at much the same subject from a similar photo starting point, but the design is far too fussy. Some sort of coloured flag for the background (is it?), a fairly uninteresting grid of cars, and another car blown up big in the front there. It's not awful, but given such spectacular starting material they could surely have come up with better than this.



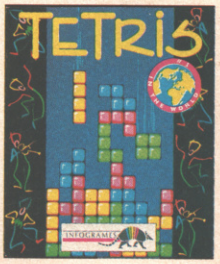
NIGHTSHIFT (Lucasfilm)
POP UP (Infogrames)

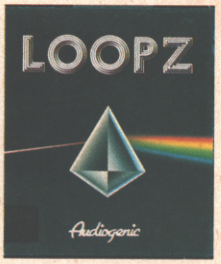
Puzzle games, often abstract, prove notoriously hard to illustrate, resulting in some diabolical box artwork. At the risk of sounding like a stuck record, here's more praise for a Lucasfilm box, this one the half platform game, half puzzle thing *Night Shift*. Small and unassuming, the cartoony conveyor belts carrying around stylised versions of famous characters works a treat, and remains fairly entertaining long after you've bought the game. But, oh dear, look what could have happened. *Pop Up* from Infogrames has it all (unfortunately, most of it doesn't make much sense). There's a television(?), a lemon, a key and a funny glowing star thing. Just what is going on? The front of the box doesn't tell us, and it's so ropily executed that you're unlikely to bother looking further to find out.



A-10 TANK KILLER (Dynamix)
PROFLIGHT (HiSoft)

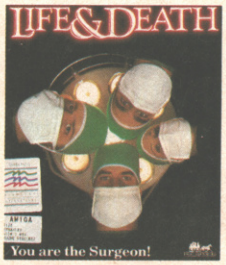
Now this one is good. *A-10 Tank Killer* is as in your face as they come – an extreme close up of this real ugly mutha of an aircraft coming straight at you, the Gattling gun (or whatever it is) mounted in its nose looking horrifyingly close. Bold lettering, a giant yellow sun balancing the composition and a good quote add up to one killer of a box cover. HiSoft similarly go for the plane-flying-right-at-you look, but from there on it goes horribly wrong. Having such a massive border allows the nose of the plane to break out of the frame, but at the same time leaves an awful lot of dead space, but it's the dull, faded out colours and emotionless computer generated look of the artwork that seals its fate.

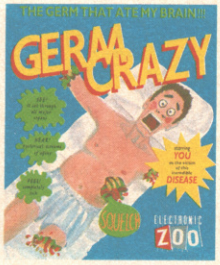




TETRIS (Infogrames)
LOOPZ (Audiogenic

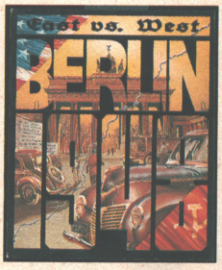
The line between good and bad is much closer and less well defined here than with many of the other pairs referred to, so let's see if you can work out why *Tetris* is over on the left and *Loopz* relegated to the right. Both are those difficult-to-illustrate puzzle games, both feature the company name at the bottom, the game name larger across the top, and fairly striking design. The problem is that being striking is about all *Loopz* has going for it – the beam-of-light-directed-through-a-prism has, as far as we can see, absolutely nothing to do with the game. It's meaningless, while Infogrames have made the bold move of trying to illustrate what the game looks like in play (and with some degree of success too).





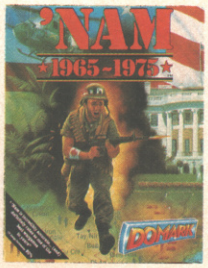
LIFE & DEATH (Mindscape)
GERM CRAZY (Electronic Zoo)

Making games set in hospitals look sexy can't be the easiest of tasks, but you *can* make them grab the attention. *Life & Death* tempts with its 'You are the surgeon!' line, but the image it gives is very much from the patient's point of view – staring helplessly up at four masked faces and a bright battery of lights. You may have seen similar before, but you can't deny it works. *Germ Crazy*, on the other hand, is presumably meant to be funny – it certainly makes you want to stop and look, if only to check that the illustration is really as bad as it looked on first glance. We haven't seen its like since the Darling brothers let one of their sisters loose with her junior paint box for an 8-bit budget pack. Ugh...



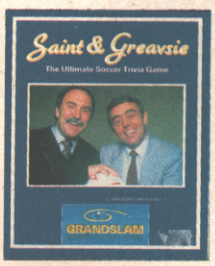
WOLF PACK (Mirrorsoft)
EAST VS WEST: BERLIN 1948 (Rainbow Arts)

If in doubt, just stick the name of the game on the front really, *really* big – people can't help noticing it then. And if you're going to be really clever, have some sort of picture showing through the lettering for added impact. Mirrorsoft certainly seem to believe in this philosophy, and here it works for them – dark, brooding, menacing, and with a mercifully simple image showing through the logo so it doesn't distract. Rainbow Arts try for a similar trick, but oh dear, it all runs away with them rather. Flags encroaching in the corners, a symbolic crack down the middle of the picture and an incredibly busy piece of artwork leave it all a real mess. Can *you* read that lettering properly? It's squinting time...



THEIR FINEST HOUR (Lucasfilm)
'NAM (Domark)

Another nice Lucasfilm box. Again the distinctive surround, but what makes it is the combination of genuine WW2-style artwork and pleasantly restrained lettering. One glance at this and your impression is of a) a very classy looking product and b) that it is, of course, about the Battle Of Britain, which is presumably exactly what was intended. Compare it to Domark's *'Nam* – also a fairly heavyweight product based very closely on the specifics of a real conflict – to see how it shouldn't be done. Does this look classy and intelligent, or like a *Commando*-style action game? You decide...



ELVIRA (Accolade)
SAINT & GREAVSIE (Grandslam)

Getting sponsorship from a real world personality can certainly help the profile of a game, with a strong (and immediately recognisable) image – something obviously abundantly clear to Accolade. With *Elvira* they really ram the message home – that spooky sky, the pumpkin, the rather (ahem) oversized Elvira herself vamping out at us. They even give us a horror-style version of their logo (no accident where it's placed presumably...). Next to this, Grandslam's effort seems even sadder. Some half-hearted publicity shot printed small, a bit of crappy lettering – there are minutes of thought behind this. Rubbish.

What's your favourite and least favourite Amiga box of the year, and why? Best suggestions to us at 'Boxes Of The Year' (the usual AP address) win software prizes!

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IF I'D KNOWN THEN...

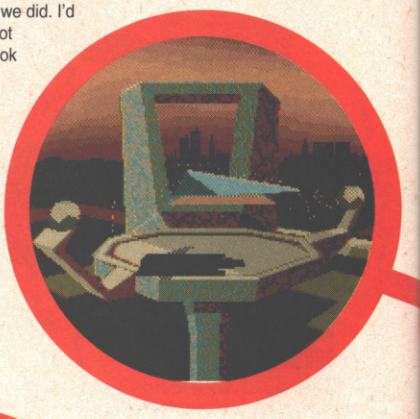
GRAFTGOLD was formed in 1983 by programmer-cum-designers Steve Turner and Andrew Braybrook. In its prolific history, the team has grown and shrunk and tackled all sorts of projects, but has continued to accumulate prestigious awards with top-notch original wares including *Avalon* and *Paradroid* and quality arcade conversions such as *Rainbow Islands*. Currently there are five on the team, the main programmers being Steve, Andrew and Gary J. Foreman, who worked on *Iron Man, Realms*, and the never-to-be-seen PC Engine version of *Paradroid*.

SIMULCRA

Steve Turner: This was a struggle for me. I didn't start it. When I took over the project we had a good 3D system without a game, which in some ways was a nice challenge. I sat down and thought 'What can this system do?' and devised a game around it to use it to its utmost. I didn't have a lot of time to complete it. I would have liked to have put in stuff like a save and load screen – it turned out to be a much larger game that we imagined. I'd also stack the levels slightly differently so that the early ones were smaller. We designed what we thought were tiny levels and they turned out to be huge.

I wanted *Simulcra* to run as fast as possible so it'd play like an arcade game – and I succeeded – though maybe it got complicated too early on. There were a few optimisations I could have made to the 3D system, but you can spend your whole life rewriting 3D systems and that's what some people seem to do.

I was also very restricted by the fact that we had no designer for the 3D objects – if I was doing it again I'd make sure we did. I'd like to have had some different looking objects, but not having a designer didn't help – each one we put in took ages to do. The simple objects keep the program running fast, but every improvement to a game you can think of is usually to the detriment of something else – like the speed it runs at. It's a difficult compromise. If you want to hear the best sound, it's best to listen to a sound demo – you haven't got room to do that sort of stuff in a game unless you're going to have lots of disk accesses. It's largely the same with graphics – you can get some stunning effects on demos but they tend to eat up memory. The essence of a game is to push each area as far as you can within the limitations and to have a program in there at the same time.



RAINBOW ISLANDS

Andrew Braybrook: I'm very happy with the way this turned out. Any differences between the coin-op and our version are minor and cosmetic. It performs very much as the arcade one did.

Changes? Well, it would have been nice to get the last three islands in, but it would have been one meg only if we'd done that – and we'd have needed enough time to do it too, of course. We have upgraded it all slightly since then, for an American version. Player One and Two are now different colours, as they are in the arcade, but there wasn't enough room to do that on the English game because it would have meant storing a new set of animation frames for the different coloured character, and there wasn't the space for it.

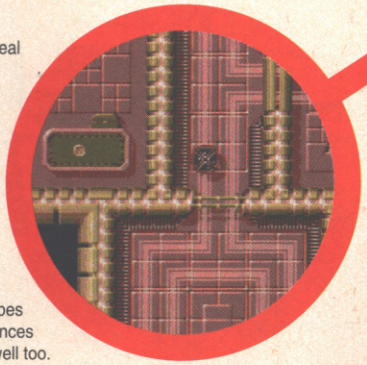
I learned a lot about how the Japanese put games together – the sort of depth that they go to, and the amount of planning they do before they even write a line of code, is quite incredible. That's fine if you have the time and funds to do it, but unfortunately publishers want to see results on screen. It doesn't matter to them how much time you could have saved by putting it down on paper.

PARADROID 90

Andrew Braybrook: Well, for a start, the choice of publisher was a real duffer. We got terrible artwork, terrible publicity and no royalties.

If I'd known then that the ST was not going to make up much of the sales I'd like to have pioneered *Paradroid 90* on the Amiga instead. I could have got an all-directional scrolling system in there no problem. The only reason I didn't was that all the ships were designed for the ST's screen width and they took so long to design that we didn't have time to redo them for the Amiga version.

Otherwise, I'm really quite happy with the way the game turned out. I don't think I'd want to change the look of it at all. It basically had everything in it that I wanted to have in the original C64 version all those years ago – such as being able to see actual robots when they're described to you, say. There aren't as many different types of robot as there were on the C64, but there are more obvious differences in the way they behave. Having different weapons and stuff worked well too.

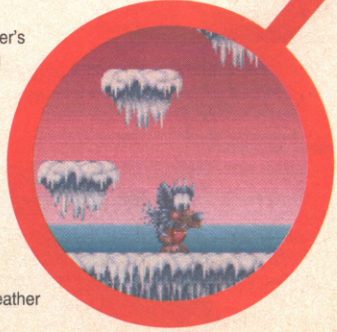


FIRE AND ICE

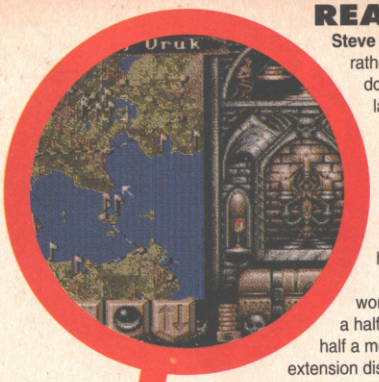
Andrew Braybrook: This is nearly finished. It's gone through a few changes since it started. The main character's changed from a floppy-eared doggy to a walking, running, jumping wolf. He's still functionally the same, spitting ice balls around and so on, and he has the little puppies which currently act like runaway multiples. You can send them into places he can't go and so on, because they're more indestructible than him.

As far as using what I learned from *Rainbow* is concerned, it certainly applies to the way the meanies move and progress. I start with a simple meanie, which just beetles around, and then the algorithms develop as player awareness is built in. In the cold world you start on there are these badgers which don't fire and sometimes fall off the edges. Then you end up with these incas which beetle backwards and forwards, turn to face the player before firing, and attempt to get on the same level as the player. They're more aware of the player's presence, basically.

There are eight basic lands going from cold to hot, via Scotland – with killer haggis and thunderstorms, 'cos it always rains in Scotland – and a bit of underwater. I'm trying to incorporate the weather into it. There're clouds which can be used to get extra snow bombs, for example. The more you shoot them, the harsher the weather gets until eventually the clouds get angry and chuck out lightning bolts.



REALMS



Steve Turner: The main thing I learned here was that it's worthwhile pioneering a product on a single machine rather than trying to do different versions at once. The problem with the multi-machine approach is that you don't have the whole thing on any one machine at any one time, so you can't really play it as a whole until the last moment. When we wanted to make changes they had to be executed on all versions rather than having a single prototype which could easily be changed.

I designed most of *Realms* on paper first, without putting it on any machine. It's the way I work. I always saw the mechanics of this game as quite complex and I knew that if they weren't sorted out on paper first then it would become a nightmare. I made sure I put in ample provision for parameters I could change with ease too – you can't test gameplay on paper, but you can make sure than you build in a degree of flexibility to allow for them later on. For instance, food was controlled by a very simple number – how much available each season. By modifying a few variables I can change the feel of the whole game.

Other changes? Looking back now I think I could make the game run much faster, but it's not worth worrying about that now. Given the limitations of time and money, and those of the machine – it had to run on a half meg machine – I'm very pleased with the result. The style of game it is, it's almost a miracle that it fits in half a meg. It's a very big program. I'd have liked more levels too – we put 10 in at the end, but I hope to do extension disks for it. I was trying to get a strategy game for people who don't like strategy games – you'd play it by reactions instead – and I think it succeeds admirably. My 10 year-old son adores it, which was a bit of a shock!

Graftgold, left to right – Andrew Braybrook, Jason Page (programming and music), Steve Turner (seated), Gary Foreman

IVAN 'IRONMAN' STEWART'S SUPER OFFROAD RACER

Gary J Foreman: In terms of doing the conversion differently there are only a few small technical changes I could have made, but they wouldn't really make it run any faster. It would have been nice to have a bit more memory for some samples to make it sound better, for instance, but that's minor stuff, isn't it?

In terms of learning from the conversion, we found out that you don't need to get every detail exactly right to make a game play as well as it can. With the arcade machine, each wheel of the truck was controlled separately on the map. It analysed the positions of the wheels relative to each other to work out how the truck should tilt and bounce and so on, which is far too much detail for the Amiga. But saying that, it *does* work in the arcade – you can tell that some very clever stuff's happening there with the wheels.

In terms of design the original wasn't very well structured, so we certainly learned how *not* to do it. The amount of time it took to process each wheel was a pain. We tidied up the code as much as we could – trying to recreate it their way was far too difficult.

THE FUTURE

Steve Turner: Yes, another 3D game may be on the cards. I'd like to use the vector system in a way that no one's ever used it before – something radical like racing yachts or something, not a space game. We've got a futuristic car-racing-cum-shoot-'em-up design running at the moment. What I'm looking at is marrying up the textured *Realms* stuff with the *Simulcra* stuff to run objects over textured backgrounds, which could look rather sexy.

I'd like to have a go at doing the *Avalon* series on 16-bit too. What I was trying to do with that was to get excitement and flexibility of a text adventure within the confines of an arcade game. Unfortunately, the Spectrum was too limiting to do that. *Dragontorc* – the second program – was closer to it. I was extremely limited by the amount of text and objects I could do on the machine. Now I'm not sure how I'd do it. I quite like presenting it as a 3D image as if you're there, but I'd probably go for something isometric. I could use the polygon system, but you can't capture the same atmosphere, and you'd really need proper sprites over the top – people with polygons look really stupid.

I've also got a yearning to go back to the first program I ever wrote – *3D Space Wars* – too!

Andrew Braybrook: I'd like to do *Gribbly's Day Out* and *Uridium* on the Amiga. The Amiga version of *Uridium* that Mindscape were doing never happened. We were getting a version done which really would have looked like the C64 version but that never happened either, and I started a 32-colour version but that was frozen. I'm sure I'll get round to it though. Apart from *Return To Genesis*, no one's done any really fast scrolling on the Amiga.

I should think it would still use the same sort of screen format, only with a little bit of vertical scrolling to cater for bigger dreadnoughts. I would use hardware sprites for a massive starfield in the background and have destructible walls and things manoeuvering around on the decks – like tanks and stuff. The enemy fighter planes would take off from landing strips, so you could get them on the ground. Basically, it's lots of stuff I wanted to do on the C64 *Uridium*.

I often get asked about a 16-bit *Gribbly's* too – there are actually small bits and pieces of that going into *Fire And Ice*. It would be quite nice to do a fairly straightforward conversion of that one.

As far as original stuff is concerned, I'd like to do a top-down helicopter type game with all-directional scrolling. It'd be somewhere between a simulation and an arcade game, with different missions to achieve.

Gary J Foreman: It would be nice to do another type of game using the *Ironman* kind of 3D landscape but with something else running over it, and perhaps scrolling as well. We were actually playing around with the *Realms* landscape, which is a similar sort of thing. We were thinking about driving trucks over that with hills and stuff like that. I played about with a little demo of the *Realms* screen display with the idea of creating a golf game too – I think it would work well. I'd ideally like to do a puzzle game of some sort – I like them a lot. My favourite has to be *Shanghai* still – the graphics aren't much and the sound is non-existent, but as a game it just *works*.

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GAME REVIEWS CONTINUED

From Che Guevara to Steve McQueen – this review section has real character.

BREACH 2 ENHANCED

Publisher: Impressions
Price: £29.99
Authors: Omnitrend
Release: Out now

It may not look like much, but *Breach 2*'s actually quite a groovy little number.

What exactly has been enhanced here is a little difficult for me to say as there are no clues in the instructions and I've never played the original. Be that as it may, we never properly reviewed the previous version, and as I did find myself enjoying it immensely, I think it deserves an enlightening paragraph or two.

Playing as a role-playing game, and to refrain from plot regurgitating, you log on as a squad leader, choose a 'Scenario' (ie mission) and then basically have to accomplish a specific task to gain victory upon where your squad leader will move up a rank. The sort of things required of you are to kill off a percentage of the enemy, destroy specific items or simply to get your men to a specific point – you are playing with a team of men, though it's just the statistics of the leader that are important. (In other words, if he dies, it's game over). Everything is done in the old fashioned role-playing sort of way; small men are moved with restricted movement points over a simple playing area, then, when you click on the 'end turn' box, the enemy (always played by the computer) moves his and so on under a limited number of turns. If you've ever played a standard role-playing game, you've theoretically played this.

Breach 2 is in truth about as standard a role-playing/strategy game as you could get, but despite immediate impressions, an extremely well-designed and executed one at that; half an hour of playing reveals a rather reassuring complexity to the game. More scenario disks are on their way, but what sounds more intriguing is the ability to play this game in conjunction with other Impressions games all linked into one mammoth adventure, providing possibly the ultimate dream for any true role-playing game fans.

● *RICH PELLEY*

THE BOTTOM LINE
A simple looking role playing game – nothing new – but with Amiga-standard depth that actually shows.
60 PERCENT

CHE: GUERILLA IN BOLIVIA

Publisher: CCS
Price: £24.99
Author: Paolo Pobbiati
Release: Out now

***Che Guevara* – the game not the rock group. Yet another average wargame.**

Guerilla in Bolivia is a strategic simulation with action sequences. The game was inspired by the diaries of Che Guevara which were kept during the campaign commencing on November the 7th 1966 in Camiri.

The simulation takes place across the whole of Bolivia – you have six detailed maps as used by Che himself. You will have to deal with ambushes, clashes with militia, sort out the food and provisions for your men, train any new recruits and run a Guerrilla campaign. You start with 15 fighting men, the core of the Che Guevara's operational unit.

Guerilla in Bolivia is two games in one, a sophisticated strategic simulation and an exciting adventure.

(c) 1991 CCS Simulations Ltd.

Er, oops. Actually, the back of the packaging to this war game has both solved my uncomfortable dilemma of how to begin this review and explained what the game entails in one rather convenient swoop, leaving me shaking and sweating with panic considerably less than when I usually sit down to write a review.

The game in this review, incidentally, has been written by those people at CCS, veterans of the war game since the Spectrum, who this time have mercilessly opted for the text and lists style of

The Mirrorsoft swan-song zooms in.

CISCO HEAT

Publisher: Image Works
Price: £25.99
Authors: Ice
Release: Out now

If this is how the cops behave around here, just what are the criminals like?

Well, I've been playing the *Cisco Heat* coin-op which sits in pride of place beside the coffee machine to death ever since I won it for us a few weeks ago (only to have to give away to some undeserving wretch – er, lucky reader – but that's another story), so I'm just about the best-placed person there is to tell you how good a conversion of it this Image Works licence is. Oh dear...

Okay, so being nothing like it's parent coin-op doesn't necessarily mean something's a bad game *per se*. And indeed *Cisco Heat* isn't a bad game. The graphics are a bit small and a bit crude and the street layouts (supposedly accurate maps of the real San Francisco area) bear no resemblance to the arcade ones whatsoever after the first level (which itself has only a tenuous grip on the coin-op's first stage), but the essential nature of the manic driving experience remains unchanged. The hills and dips which are such a major part of the 'Frisco landscape are still there, and they work surprisingly well – you really *do* get that stomach-lurching feel as you fly over the top of a particularly steep incline. The speed – that other crucial prerequisite of the good racing game – is also of a more than acceptable level, but after that things start to go wrong...

First and foremost, the control system is absolutely horrible. *Lotus Esprit Turbo Challenge* set the standard with it's natural and friendly 'fire-button-to-accelerate' method, but *Cisco Heat* is stuck way back in the Dark Ages. The constant need to have the joystick wrenched forward to keep the car moving is stupid and unnecessary, and gets physically painful after a couple of games. Changing gear is accomplished by centring the stick and then moving it backwards and forwards with the fire button held down, believe it or not, and generally the control makes the game twice as hard and half as enjoyable to play as it should be. Mind you, there could be a reason for it – like the coin-op, Amiga *Cisco Heat* features just five levels. While the arcade game was tough enough to make completing all five a pretty challenging long-term task, most halfway-decent players will finish this inside a day. Even if you don't, the dullness (in terms of there being anything new or different to see) of the graphics in the later stages is unlikely to have you clamouring madly to get to the end. It's not just graphics either, the variations introduced towards the end of the coin-op to keep interest alive (like the option to take a different route at certain points) have been totally done away with, as has the lovely and dramatic double-decker bridge section. What's left is, frankly, nowhere nearly enough entertainment for your money.

● *STUART CAMPBELL*

THE BOTTOM LINE
A fun driving game that's fine as far as it goes, with the hills and junctions giving it a bit of originality, but the control system is abominable, it's not even slightly close to the coin-op and it's far too short to provide a decent amount of enjoyment for £26.
66 PERCENT

gameplay without even a flashing square in sight.

The addition of digitised backdrops helps to make the thing look quite Amigary but, well, you know what I'm going to say now about it, don't you? You know that I'm going to say that the thing is hardly the revolutionary war game we are all waiting with bated breath to see.

From the options screen you can advance or explore (by sending out two scouts) in any direction – once selected, and a digitised picture later, you are given any news there is of what's going on 'out there'. In between resting, training and rationing food out for individual troop member statistic altering purposes, the only remaining possibilities are to check out the maps, set up an ambush, defend or attack. The ambush option turns out to be a tacky *Operation Wolf* clone – in a war game? The true war gamer will call it blasphemey. The true war gamer should also avoid this dismal offering from CCS at all costs – I can fail to see anything on offer here that hasn't been seen at least nine and a half million billion squillion trillion times better at least nine and a half million billion squillion trillion times before.

● *RICH PELLEY*

THE BOTTOM LINE

A lethally average war game ever offering absolutely zero to the average war gamer. Only undemanding absolute beginners need apply.

34 PERCENT

Obvious titles, we love 'em. Like this...

FALLING JEWELS

Publisher: Soft & Easy Software
Price: £25.99
Authors: Chinatown
Release: Out now

Soft & Easy haven't beat about the bush with a title for this one – can you possibly guess what *Falling Jewels* is all about? There is the tenuous possibility that the falling jewels in question are a subtle reference to males reaching puberty, but no – this here's an arcade-puzzler very much along the lines of Tengen's *Klax*, only less flexible and playable. That's *Falling Jewels* in a nutshell for those in the know.

The falling jewels in *Falling Jewels* do their stuff into a 'pit'. A dinky little grabbing device like the ones in those stinky machines you see in arcades on piers or seafronts moves along the top of the screen, picks up a jewel from a 'store' in the top left-hand corner of the screen, drags it across to the pit and drops the jewel. And yes – it falls, whereupon the player guides it left or right (in the pit) until the jewel hits solid ground, either the bottom of the pit or a fallen jewel. When three or more jewels of the same colour form a line horizontally, vertically or diagonally, they disappear, leaving gravity to take its course on any jewels above.

So far, so *Tetris*, but surely there's more to it than that? Well, indeed there is, but not much. There are 48 levels to *Falling Jewels*, with a slightly different task to complete on each. On the first level, two vertical columns of three or more jewels have to be created to win, whereas Level 47 requires eight diagonal rows of six or more jewels to be formed. And there's more: when a level is completed, the program simulates the rolling of a die. If the number 'rolled' is higher than three, the pit is cleared of jewels. Otherwise, the mess remains to be faced on the next level. There are special 'Clear Up The Mess' levels to complete, too, where the mess is already provided for the player to clear up in the usual fashion.

Now all this would be easy peasy were it not for the fact that there's a limited supply of jewels to play with – in fact there's no room for error at all.

The jewels fall in *Falling Jewels*.

There simply isn't a suitable balance of colours to compensate for any mistakes, which leaves *Falling Jewels* about as enticing as Michelle Fowler's boat, and that's a fact (*Steady on, Gaz! -Ed*). And yet, as we are all acutely aware but may not wish to admit, beneath that sad exterior there lies an inner beauty capable of stirring the very heart and soul of all who view it. Suffice it to say, *Falling Jewels* is far more playable than it looks.

● *GARY PENN*

THE BOTTOM LINE

You'd probably rather be seen dead in a Mr Buyrite suit than playing this. But have a heart – get past the lousy exterior and you'd be well advised to take a tumble with *Falling Jewels*.

66 PERCENT

GOLDEN EAGLE

Publisher: Loriciel
Price:£28.99
Release: Out now

Almost *Prince Of Persia* style characters can't save Loriciels' *Golden Eagle* from a life of pure mediocrity.

Regardless of whether or not the world really needs another bloke-walking-round-shooting-things game, Loriciel have faithfully reproduced the movements of a sideways-on bloke as he walks, jumps, ducks, crawls, climbs and fires a gun, and justified their existence as follows:
Nahmur, an evil high priest, has captured the *Golden Eagle*, a powerful magical statuette, from its rightful owners. Failing to control its powers, and obviously having played this sort of game before, he's broken it into several pieces and scattered them around his city. And it's up to your bloke to collect them all and reassemble them.

He's okay, as blokes go, although he's got an annoying habit of stubbornly seeing through every last frame of his current movement (eg a stride forward) before commencing the next, a trait which often gets him into trouble. The real snag is that there's nothing terribly interesting for him to do. There are robots patrolling the corridors which can be shot, after a bit of wrestling with the 'evolutive' controls. And there are the pieces of Eagle to collect, of course. They're locked in safes which need to be cracked. Oh, and there's a version of *Reversi* you can play if you want, the relevance of which I've yet to fathom.

It was all looking pretty grim until I discovered the fold-out wall chart at the bottom of the box. This comes with a comprehensive set of stickers which you can use to build up a map as you go along. A couple of percent extra for that, then. But, apart from that, it's pretty tricky to find anything to heap praise upon. And not only is *Golden Eagle* dull to play, but it's also heavily reliant on disk accessing and swapping. It didn't even have the decency to tell me to press Return after changing disks, instead leaving me sitting there like a complete nobwit. I ask you.

● *JONATHAN DAVIES*

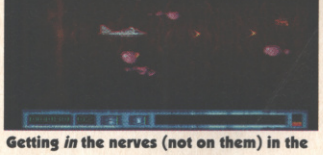
THE BOTTOM LINE

Uninspired, uninnovative, uninteresting, unaddictive and, above all, un-French.

55 PERCENT

FANTASTIC VOYAGE

Publisher: Centaur
Price: £25.99
Author: Marc Hawlitzeck
Release: Out now



Getting *in* the nerves (not on them) in the graphically delightful *Fantastic Voyage*.

As Jimmy Greaves would put it, if he were a computer games reviewer, and he was reviewing this game, and he couldn't think of a suitable opening either, "Shoot-'em-ups are a funny old game."

Mais pourquoi, you ask? Surely they just all involve shooting things – nothing funny about that. Buzz off Jimmy, you goit. But hang on, Jimmy does have a point. Take *Fantastic Voyage* if you will. It merely involves shooting things, boasting a complete lack of fancy twists in the gameplay, yet it succeeds, lying a cut above the majority of its counterparts. Why, asks a troubled nation?

You see, it's those little extras that give a game the edge. Someone told me that once, yet spookily it applies here too. Based on the film and book of the same name, *FV* sees you plus submarine shrunk down to molecular proportions and injected into the body of a Czechoslovakian scientist, for reasons best known to the plot. So if you're wondering where the shoot-'em-up part comes in – that's provided by the body's natural defences who are out to get you.

Fantastic Voyage is what I'd term a 'precise shoot-em-up' – you must calculate how to kill, or indeed avoid, each wave of baddies in order to progress, scoring three successive hits to replenish energy. The only real irritation is the way you get sent back a bit too far when you die – but hey! – that's just me wanting things easier.

The screenshot may look a little boring to you, but what you can't see is the great rippling effect of the background and the way the light moves up and down with your ship; half the time you can't even see the side of the caverns. *Alien Breed* aside, nothing this atmospheric has been seen, heard, or animated on the Amiga before. The sheer professional feel is what makes a game for a reviewer, although admittedly it does make the reader think that the reviewer has gone mad and doesn't know what he's talking about in the process. But it has to be concluded, I liked this game a lot.

● *RICH PELLEY*

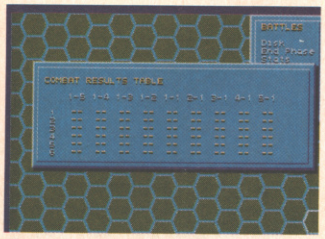
THE BOTTOM LINE

A simple, methodical, atmospheric shoot-'em-up – not very hectic, and not very surprising, but a game that still deserves to do well, Brian.

77 PERCENT

GREAT NAPOLEONIC BATTLES

Publisher: Impressions
Price: £29.99
Author: Edward Grabowski
Release: Out now



Trust us – *Great Napoleonic Battles* plays an awful lot better than it looks. And – hey! – it's got a built in editor.

Ask any innocent Amiga owner to name two of the greatest war game heroes of the last three centuries and they will indubitably come up with Napoleon Bonaparte (1769) and Sir Jonathan Davies (early 19th century). Unfortunately though, neither can be with us tonight leaving me, even more unfortunately, to do the honours. Oh dear.

As per usual, *GNB* plays with two turns per side; firstly the movement part (move squares around a scrollable map – this time made out of hexagons), then the fighting part (for the artillery section or adjacent opposing troops). The game ends when one side succeeds in their mission's objective; the enemy have been killed, certain ground is held or a certain destination is reached. Standard war game material, you might say. Yep, I would reply. There's nothing flash about the graphics, Nothing great about the sound. No action, blood, nor battle bits. Just lots of squares to move around. But what this game does have is rather more scope than usual. Three historic Napoleon battles are provided on the disk along with an editor (*Hello. Ed*). With this the lucky utiliser can modify the existing battles – fiddle with everything from objectives to maps to the 'rules' of the gameplay to make it as easy or tricky as desired. Or, if in the mood, its user may even want to create his or her own battles.

Unfortunately, this editor is the only thing on offer to the war gamer that he hasn't got already – the remainder of the game has been seen, and bettered many times, before. Tsk. War games, eh?

● *RICH PELLEY*

THE BOTTOM LINE
A stupendously average war game – its only bonus in a rather good editor.
63 PERCENT

KID GLOVES 2

Publisher: Millennium
Price: £25.99
Author: Dave Simmens
Release: February

***Rainbow Gloves* or *Kid Islands*?**

Kid Gloves 2? Nice one! I don't care what anyone says, I thought *Kid Gloves* was a brilliant little game, and the sudden unheralded appearance of a sequel was as pleasant a surprise as I've had for a while. Or so I thought, anyway. On actually loading it up, I was somewhat dismayed to discover that it is, in fact, a retitled release of a game which was widely previewed several months ago as *Little Beau* from, I think, Digital Magic. Still, that doesn't necessarily mean it's crap, so let's check it out further.

Hmm... extremely derivative *Super Wonder Boy* rip-off (then again *Super Wonder Boy* was a brilliant game, so that needn't be a bad thing)... very crude graphics, although they're quite cute in a brash cartoony sort of way... really horrible inertia on the character movement... a few nasty bits where you can get into a situation where death is the only escape... main character is spookily reminiscent of Bub and Bob from *Rainbow Islands*, but with a crap haircut... sound's a bit on the twee and grating side... lots of distinct graphic styles... seems to be aimed at the younger player, but there are rather a lot of gratuitous nipples for that... gets reasonably tricky, but not in any interesting kind of way... bears no resemblance to the original *Kid Gloves*...the odd sub-game breaks up the repetitiveness... it's moderately entertaining, but creaks as a full-price product... hmm indeed.

Kid Gloves 2 really is a bare-faced clone of *Super Wonder Boy*, but it retains most of the gameplay elements that made that game such a laugh. Unfortunately, *KG2* is a lot less sophisticated in both design and execution, and without the charming atmosphere of the earlier title the compulsion to play it for long periods of time is somewhat missing. In general it feels like a very half-hearted and half-finished effort, and while it's undeniably quite good fun to plod away at for a while, it doesn't justify the same price tag as *Another World* in a million years.

● *STUART CAMPBELL*

THE BOTTOM LINE
A waste of a good name, and a very poor deal for £26. Give it about six months, then buy the inevitable budget re-release (if you have to).
58 PERCENT

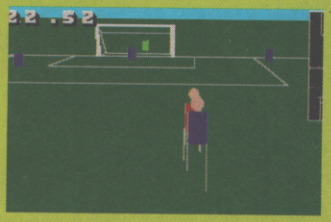
Hacking its way past all the other sports sims, here's a 'different' approach...

GRAEME SOUNESS VECTOR SOCCER

Publisher: Impulze
Price: £25.99
Authors: Glyn Humphreys (coding), William Hensell (sound and music)
Release: Out now

As a Scotsman, and the only real footy fan in the office now that Colin's gone, it had to be me who reviewed this game. To tell you the truth though, I'm a bit scared to. The game's rubbish (more on that later, analysis fans), but I don't want to have to be the one that tells old Graeme so. The Animal Of Anfield, the Gadaffi Of Govan, the Prince Of Darkness, Scotland's answer to Arnold Schwarzenegger in football boots, Graeme 'Studmarks' Souness isn't a man known for taking prisoners, on or off the field (just ask Aggie, the St Johnstone tea lady). It's fortunate, then, that Graeme is unlikely to take any criticism of this game as a personal affront, because his involvement with it would appear to begin and end with his name on the box. So let's – in a manner which I'm sure Graeme himself would heartily approve of – put the boot in.

Now, I'm all in favour of the original approach to football on the Amiga. *Kick Off* (the original) and *Man United Europe* are all very well, but they're both very much arcade-type games which just happen to be about football. The true simulation concept has been tried a couple of times so far (*I Play 3D Soccer* and *International Soccer Challenge*) without success, so there's clearly still a gap in the market for a game which gives you that real 'on the pitch' experience. In theory, *Graeme Souness Vector Soccer* fills that gap, with 3D graphics and loads of moving camera views and stuff giving a real 'Match Of The Day' feel, but – inconveniently – it more or less completely fails as a game. The most obvious reason why is the graphics – even on the minimum-detail setting, the rudimentary player figures lurch up and down the field in a manner so crude, slow and jerky that it's almost impossible to follow. Tackling happens without players appearing to go anywhere near the man in possession, and it's frequently extremely difficult to tell where the ball actually is. Control is very poor also, with players shooting and passing the ball apparently at will and the computer very rarely giving you control of the player you actually want. (Then again, for the reasons previously explained, it doesn't really help you if it does anyway).



You can speed things up a bit by removing the detail, but it has a rather strange effect on further-away players...

I hate to be so negative about such an innovative effort (and to be fair the game does have some good points, like the excellent replays you get of any goals scored by either side at the end of each half), but at the end of the day (sorry) this is a game which is twice as much fun to watch on demo mode than it is to actually try and play. Sorry Impulze (and Graeme), but this one plays like Gazza with *both* his knees knackered. And what kind of a Graeme Souness licence is it when you can't even foul anyone, anyway?

Thighs of a cow – one thing about the graphics is that they at least get the proportions of Graeme's legendary legs right!

● *STUART CAMPBELL*

THE BOTTOM LINE
A brave try, but it just doesn't work as a game. You're more likely to score the winning goal in a World Cup Final than you are to get £26 worth of entertainment out of this.
32 PERCENT

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E & OE

THE NEVERENDING STORY II

Publisher: Linel
Price: £25.99
Authors: Stuart Johnson
Release: Out now

Nice graphics, but this is sadly about as spectacular as *The Neverending Story II* ever really gets. Now if they had a rocking Limahl soundtrack...

As the sequel to *The Never Ending Story* (which I seem to recall playing years ago on my Spectrum – an adventure game if I remember rightly), *The Never Ending Story II*, while not exactly the most prestigious licence around, ought to offer plenty of inspiration for a decent game. But how do you translate the action, adventure, magic and dewy-eyed emotion of the kiddies' blockbuster (hem hem) to the Amiga?

With a devastating lack of insight, Linel have gone for the traditional ploy of lots of sub-games depicting various scenes from the film. First of all there's a sideways-on platform section through which you have to guide Bastian (your champion), avoiding monsters, leaping gaps in the floor and climbing up and down stairs. Following that are six more levels, apparently encompassing horizontal scrollers, more platform bits and a promising-sounding 3D section.

I say 'apparently', because I'm afraid I simply didn't have the patience to slog it out through screen after screen of identical platforms and staircases, particularly in the light of the excrutiating amount of disk accessing between lives, and never made it through to any of the subsequent levels. While I don't doubt that they're all just as slickly written and neatly presented as the first one, I bet they're all similarly bland, simplistic and dull too.

You can fill in your own 'huh/Never Ending Story/ended pretty sharpish in my case' joke at this point, because I really can't be bothered.

● *JONATHAN DAVIES*

THE BOTTOM LINE

Most people realised ages ago that these bitty multi-part film licence affairs don't come off – nobody wants seven crummy games for the price of one good one. A shame, because *The Neverending Story* concept is ideal fodder for a computer game – it's just that nobody seems able to pull it off. You can do much better than this.

42 PERCENT

MEDIEVAL WARRIORS

Publisher: Merit (via Linel)
Price: £25.99
Authors: Scott Lamb
Release: Out now

Bold, colourful graphics, and some nicely thought-out strategy make *Medieval Warriors* a cut above the average.

I've long since given up protesting about my ruthless treatment at the hands of the AMIGA POWER reviewer selection process, realising that my lamentations were falling on deaf ears. But in this case I reckon the last laugh's on them, because what on the surface appears to be another horrible boring wargame actually turns out quite straightforward and enjoyable. Fun, even. Perhaps almost to the point of being to the Amiga what *Rebelstar* was to the Spectrum.

Well, maybe that's going a bit far, but *Medieval Warriors* certainly shows what can be done with 12 warriors per side, a choice of four battlefields, some slick animated graphics, tremendous sound effects and the skimpiest of control mechanisms. While there's no getting away from movement phases and lists of numbers, they're all painlessly implemented and don't distract from the action, which moves along marvellously swiftly. It's all very 'involving', too. As you're dealing with individual blokes, rather than anonymous battalions and regiments, you tend to feel personally responsible for them – the thought of having to write letters to their mums back home makes you think twice before compromising their safety.

There are a few annoying omissions, though. A pause key, for a start, and some way of ending your turn when you've finished moving and attacking. (As it stands you have to wait for your timer to run out). And you can't hide behind things to sneak up on people. And, in the long run, the game's simplicity is likely to be its downfall. Once you've played the four scenarios to pieces that's it – there's no editor or promise of expansion disks (ie it might be happier as a budget game).

But until then you're likely to be hooked, not giving up until you've trashed the computer hollow and showed your chums a thing or two about strategy.

● *JONATHAN DAVIES*

THE BOTTOM LINE

A light and breezy – I hesitate to use the word – 'wargame', with ne'er a mention of Napolean, historical accuracy or any of that sort of thing.

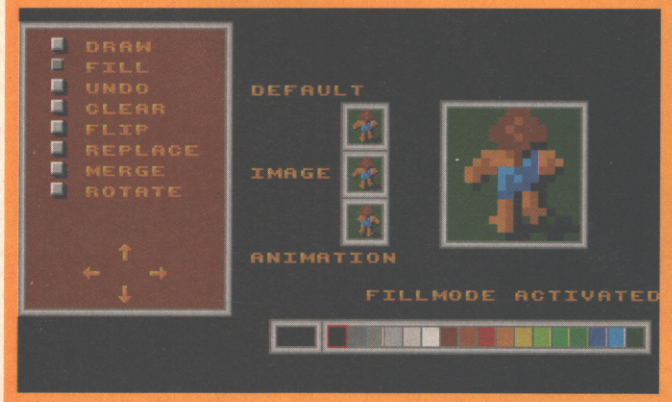
71 PERCENT

Just think how quickly Earth could have been knocked up this this add-on!

POPULOUS WORLD EDITOR

Publisher: Electronic Arts
Price: £14.99
Authors: Alexander Kochann, Oliver Reiff
Release: Out now

The *Populous World Editor* isn't the handiwork of *Populous*' authors, Bullfrog – they were happy enough with a single data disk, *The Promised Lands*. No, the two chaps credited here originally wrote the editor for a mutual friend's birthday present and it grew from there, so the story goes.



This is the Sprite Editor, which is much the same as the Block Editor. The image to be altered is shown enlarged to the right of the picture, with the available editing functions in the window to the left.

The Editor is basically a glorified art package which allows the user to give *Populous* levels a new look and create a (slightly) different feel. The bulk of the effort is directed at drawing new building blocks (with which the landscapes are built) and sprites (the characters which populate the world), while the less artistically adept among us can at least take delight in being able to fiddle with most of the parameters that determine the way a world will play. Not that there are that many variables to change – two dozen at most, which obviously puts a limitation on the possible variations of the theme. Also provided with the package are five finished worlds (Original Green, French Revolution, Space, Fast Food and Wild West) and their associated characters, along with a sixth set of generic building blocks to fiddle with also.

The creation of a world is a simple enough process. First, pick a theme – love, peace, skipping and pressing flowers is all that springs to mind at the moment, so let's stick with that. This 'concept' has to extend to the landscape elements (ie the land itself – the scenery, ankhs and buildings mustn't look out of place). Grass and water fit the bill, and so do trees and flowers. In my Planet Claire utopia there is no destruction, so the burned-out buildings will be replaced by the improved residences as a result of the two sides making friends. 'Good' and 'Evil' now exist only to differentiate the two population types (if I could change the terms I would, but the editor doesn't allow this so any thoughts of having two named opposing footy supporter teams running riot are out of the window). The ankhs I think would look better as – ooh, how about a heart and a yin-yang symbol? And to make everyone on my Planet Claire as happy as possible I'll set the Intelligence,

RUGBY COACH

Publisher: D & H Games
Price: £24.99
Author: Wynford Davies
Release: Out now

Between you and me, this looks just like the last two hundred football/rugby management games. But – hey! – *Rugby Coach* might be great anyway...

Um, just between me and you a minute, there's one teensy weensy little thing I'd like to bring up, bearing no relation to that Kentucky Fried Chicken I had last night. Management games are what I'm alluding to here. Why oh why oh why do software companies feel compelled to release the stupid things? 99.9 percent of each month's crop are inexplicably the same as 99.9 percent of the management games already available, 99.9 percent receive hopeless reviews in 99.9 percent of the magazines, usually because (99.9 percent of the time) the accused software company has only made about 0.1 percent progress since their last crappy production. Basically, and this is only an opinion, it all adds up to 599.6 percent.

Yet month after month after month, management game after management game after management game is churned out indicating, albeit dubiously, that there are people out there who actually buy and, one assumes, like them. It is these people, people who let games like *Populous 2* pass innocently by, people who wouldn't realise that the management game is terminally dead even if you tattooed it on their bottom, that I assume would buy this sort of thing. So let's be slightly more objective for their sake.

Here goes then. *Rugby Coach*. Well, it's not exactly original, but what the heck, eh? And it's icon driven – probably the most effective method, I'd say. And it's all text with no animation, just text, text, text. Easier on the eyes. And the gameplay is simple – pick teams, buy players, play games, look at results, re-arrange teams, buy new players. All the usual stuff. Hmmm. And there's an annoying delay for anything to happen when you click the mouse. Um. Erm...

If you can think of any objective comments about this game, perhaps you'd write in and let me know. For me a management game is a management game and will always be until someone does something new with the form, which, it has to be said here, they haven't.

● *RICH PELLEY*

THE BOTTOM LINE
A management game with nothing fundamentally wrong with it except for the fact that it's a management game.
42 PERCENT

STEVE MCQUEEN WESTPHASER

Publisher: Loriciel
Authors: Vincent Baillet (hard) Jean-Pierre Vitulli (soft) (Don't ask us, we don't know what that means either...)
Price: £25.99
Release: Out now

If you see Mr McQueen shoot him. Better still, if you see any of the programmers responsible for *Steve McQueen Westphaser*, shoot them.

Here's a funny one. The game's called *Steve McQueen Westphaser*, but it doesn't have Steve McQueen in it and you can't use a lightphaser either. Good start. In actual fact it's a no-nonsense duck-shooter in *Operation Wolf* style, set, unsurprisingly, in the Wild West. You play a sheriff and you have to apprehend (ie kill) half-a-dozen criminals, which you do by slaughtering lots of other people in saloons and so on until the baddies deign to show up. Your bullets are limited and the bad guys shoot back, so you've got your work cut out to catch everyone before you are yourself despatched to Boot Hill.

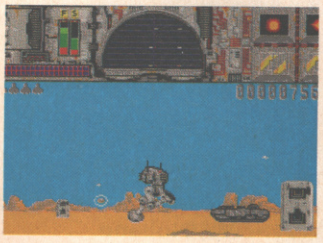
Good things about this game include the bright, unusually-coloured graphics and the fact that if you shoot the girls dancing in the saloons their dresses fall off. Wow. Bad things include the incredibly limited nature of the gameplay, the very poor mouse control of your gunsight, the useless instructions which make it tricky to work out exactly what you're supposed to be doing beyond shooting everything that moves (for example, how do you get extra ammo? I've got no idea), and the incredible difficulty of some of the later rounds. I can't really be bothered writing any more than that – I think you've all worked out by now that you've got better things to do with your money.

● *STUART CAMPBELL*

THE BOTTOM LINE
Pretty hopeless shooting-gallery effort that's easily eclipsed by several budget titles (such as *Op Wolf* and *Op Thunderbolt* from *The Hit Squad* or *Sharkey's Moll* from Zeppelin). Don't waste your time by even thinking about it.
25 PERCENT

THUNDER BURNER

Publisher: Loriciel
Price: £19.99
Author: Bernard Aure
Release: Out now



Buck Rogers and *After Burner* collide – and the result is unfortunately a rather messy accident. A shame, *Thunder Burner* could have been a lot better.

From the inaugural moment I sceptically plucked the perplexingly orange disk from the arbitrary polystyrene packaging to be found strategically shoved within this inexplicably shiny and suggestively foreign double-cassette sized box (*Guess who got a new Thesaurus for Christmas. -Ed*), I knew I was in for a weird time with this one.

Game play 'befalls thus'. You primarily take control of a robot, hurtling constantly into the screen, which can be transformed Transformer-style into a far less clumsy aeroplane once half speed is reached. So what we have here is a sort of *Space Harrier* clone if you'd allow Mr Imagination a seat for a while, although one difference is that your sprite remains central whilst everything else changes position accordingly – there's a special word for this, but I can't remember it, and it isn't in my new Thesaurus either. Tacky thing. Anyway, here's where the relays come in; small spheres carefully dotted throughout the play area depicting the required route, necessitating collection. Miss two or three in plane or robot mode respectively, and you will automatically turn into the robot and slow to half your original speed.

Not too weird so far, eh? There is, however, a big however. At any time F10 calls up VCR mode – a neat little twist which allows the game to be 'rewound' to a chosen point and restarted. So every time you crash into a pillar, are shot down by a baddy, or lose speed in the plane and crash to the ground you can rewind a bit then simply avoid the same mistake. And here comes that however. However. Nope, not big enough. HOWEVER (that's more like it), provided you don't take too long about it, you can rewind before the life counter has decreased – hence effectively playing with infinite lives. A bug or a carefully thought-out French revelation? Well, who cares as it completely ruins the game – which was totally boring, crap-graphiced, not enough baddied and pointless easy anyway. I'm afraid no amount of money, sex, drugs or purple Quality Street can persuade me to recommend a game where the only →

Death, Birth and Manna Rates at maximum.

And so it goes – for my 'nice' world I want to allow the building of land, but I don't want either 'side' to be able to use any of those rotten disasters (which means that the swamp and knights aren't necessary). Now all that remains is to define the people – for a start no-one has any clothes because there are no inhibitions or adverse weather conditions. Having saved all this stuff to disk along the way, I can now load it into the original *Populous* in the same way as I would a data disk. Planet Claire is now ready to rock and roll...

The sprites and (seen here) building blocks are presented for all to see. Now it's simply a matter of choosing which block is to be edited before entering the editor and drawing away...

Limitations? Well, you can't draw your own level maps – not unless the original *Populous*' Custom option is employed – which is a shame. *The Editor*'s not as user-friendly as it could have been either, but that's not to say it's difficult to use – it's just inflexible, especially in light of most 'proper' art packages. The other problem is that most, if not all, worthwhile combinations of variables have been done with the original *Populous* and *The Promised Lands* disk, so that all that remains here is to visually personalise worlds. Is that really enough to make it worthwhile?

● *GARY PENN*

THE BOTTOM LINE
As far as editors go, this one does the job but there's only so much to be done with it. Still, there's fun to be had here for *Populous* fans keen to do their own thing.
70 PERCENT

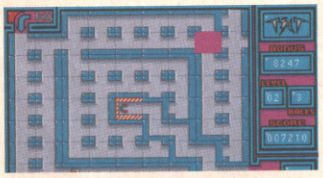
challenge is whether you can beat the end of level baddy or not (as you can't rewind on this bit). Oh no.

● *RICH PELLEY*

THE BOTTOM LINE
Completely, absolutely, entirely, thoroughly, totally, utterly, wholly disappointingly rubbish *Space Harrier* clone with no challenge whatsoever.
30 PERCENT

TILT

Publisher: Genias
Price: £25.99
Authors: Giuliano Claudio Peritore
Release: Out now



Nice idea, shame about the end result.

Whether a result of a sinister conspiracy amongst leading software producers, the conjunction of Venus and Jupiter or the price of tea in China, the country has suddenly become flooded with games called *Tilt* featuring balls rolling around mazes. Well, two anyway. On the one hand there's Code Masters' offering, reviewed last time, and on the other is the contender from wacky Italian company Genias. A showdown is inevitable, and, though it pains me to say so, the odds are heavily in favour of the Codies.

While the Codies kept true to their word, letting you 'tilt' the maze to steer the ball around it, Genias have you controlling the ball directly using up, down, left and right, *PacMan*-style. Let go of the controls altogether and the ball rolls round at random. However, to start with at least, there's no viable route from the maze's start to its finish. So, as well as manoeuvring the ball round obstacles, through teleporters and over bonuses, it's up to you to rearrange the tiles which comprise the maze by sliding them about.

But sadly the anticipated manically-trying-to-keep-your-mind-on-two-jobs-at-once, battling-against-the-clock, gosh-isn't-this-addictive gameplay simply fails to materialise. Instead, once the novelty of the first few levels has waned, things reach a plateau and never really take off again. It sounded promising, but I suppose you can never tell with puzzle games until you've sat down and written them.

● *JONATHAN DAVIES*

THE BOTTOM LINE
A combination of nice idea and tidy programming that unfortunately doesn't 'gel'.
50 PERCENT

HOME ALONE

Publisher: Accolade
Price: £24.99
Authors: Capstone
Release: Out now

We hate that bloody little brat!

Home Alone – the game – is naturally based scrupulously on the film of the same name which, for its non-viewers' benefit, was based on the pranks of an eight year-old left all alone at home as he attempts to foil the plans of two burglars. The programmers have homed in on the simplicity of the plot, reproducing it faithfully, but moronically failing to realise that in the process they've created a game far too simple, too repetitive and too sub-level like for any sane Amiga owner to actually be interested in.

But anyway, anyway, anyway. Anyway. The game plays in two phases. Phase one involves you as Kevin (the kid) scrolling left and right around your house laying traps for Harry and Marv (the burglars) who are due to arrive in an hour (10 minutes real time). This boils down to a case of pocketing each flashing object (potential trap) you come across, whilst repeatedly cycling through your inventory to discover locations to lay the trap.

The thing is, challengingly speaking, this just isn't. If you can cope with memorizing the layout of the house (easy), setting as many traps as possible (ludicrously easy) and locating the gun vital for the next part (it's in your bedroom) then you've got it made. Ten minutes later its onto phase two, which boils down to running around the house (again), jumping over your own traps whilst endeavouring to lure Harry and Marv through them – the higher traps requiring a shot from your gun. For your benefit, the top of the screen informs you of what room each burglar is in. And here's where the two blatant flaws in the game come in. 1) One touch from either burglar (quite likely) and that's it. Game Over. Start Again on Phase One. 2) There is nothing, beyond what I've just described, to the game at all. Hit each burglar with a trap ten times and you've beaten the game. 'That's it?', you can't help thinking. Yes, that most depressingly is it – point 1) is just a way of delaying you ever getting to point 2). And I haven't even mentioned the jerky graphics, awkward controls and rubbish sound yet. Possibly not a wasted licence, but a film that was wasted being licenced in the first place.

● *RICH PELLEY*

THE BOTTOM LINE
A ludicrously and unenjoyable film licence. Don't disappoint yourself.
48 PERCENT

ELVIRA – THE ARCADE GAME

Publisher: Flair
Price: £25.99
Author: Mike Hedley
Release: Out now

Boo! Elvira pops out (hem hem) for a breath of fresh air.

In the introductory paragraph of the manual the coquettish Elvira announces, "It's not very often I get *out* of bed for a man", but that's exactly what she does for us here. Still never mind, lads – there's a job to be done, and happily the three-stage, ghoul-ridden arcade adventure she hops out of bed for is actually rather good.

Those who played the demo on a recent AMIGA POWER coverdisk will know that already, of course – the game sees Elvira strut her elegant, long-legged stuff with panache, in one of the most absorbing walk-crouch-and-jump-'em-ups I've seen in a long time. Beautifully detailed baddies swagger onto screen smoothly, and disappear (on the business end of our buxom babe's weaponry or magic spells) with similar attention to detail. The backdrops look wonderful, the animation is as smooth as one would like to imagine our heroine's undergarments, and the eight-way scrolling shifts the parallax scenery around with ease.

Elvira can chuck sharp-edged hardware around, and also collect magic potions as she goes, which can then be used at any subsequent point in the game. Don't waste them though – fireballs, invincibility and a first aid spell (to name just three) need to be cast at strategic points to prove most effective. For example, the 'Feather Fall Spell' gives Elvira the ability to fall from heights and drift down to a safe landing – very handy, but probably best kept in reserve until a suitable drop rears its vertigo-inducing head. Don't worry if you're totally stuck without the correct potion – this being a traditional arcade adventure you get shop sequences where a friendly Trader allows Elvira to swap one of her collected potions for one of his. This way you can be sure to have the right bottle at the right time (if you manage to find him at all, that is).

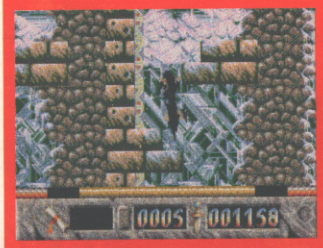
I mentioned three stages back there, didn't I? You see, at the start of the game you get to chose whether you want to play either Arctic Earth (snow, ice and more snow) or the Underworld Of Fire (fireballs and demons) – take your pick, but both have to completed before you're allowed to progress to the Castle. Emerge victorious from this final level and the title Queen Elvira of Transylvania is yours (or, erm, hers).

Don't worry about the size of the game either – three levels might not sound like very much, but they're all big and tough, and packed with a whole halloween-party full of baddies. There's a definite puzzle element to much of it too, a sudden loss of life informing you that a quick trigger finger isn't all you're going to need to ensure victory. On your next approach to whatever particular trap it was that killed you, select your chosen weapon with a bit more cunning, and use the old grey-matter. There's nothing here too mind-bending – just enough to keep you on your toes.

Elvira moves as well as we all imagine she would, and it's easy to see that a lot of thought has gone into her animation (tap the pause button when she's halfway through changing direction mid-jump for a better look). In fact the whole presentation of this game is of a high, professional standard. The chilling soundtracks at the start, the click of stiletto on granite as Elvira hits the ground – this is a finely groomed product through and through.

The only real complaint I have is that when the action hots up, Elvira's dagger-throwing arm isn't quite quick enough. It's beautifully animated, but all too often the baddies are on top of you before you have time to unleash your hardware. But this is being finicky – if this style of (albeit slightly dated) game is what lights your fire then it's quite possible that *Elvira* could be the girl of your dreams.

● *NEIL WEST*



Elvira begins her decent into the underground of the Arctic World.

THE BOTTOM LINE
Highly polished arcade adventure that's a real joy to play. *Elvira* moves like a dream, as she struts her stuff through three BIG levels. No gameplay surprises, but a fine example of a tried 'n' trusted formula.
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BUDGET

A slightly squished up budgie/compilation section this month, but we've still managed to squeeze a good few wise-buys in. No Mirror Image stuff this month, you'll note – we're not sure what's going to happen to that re-release range yet...

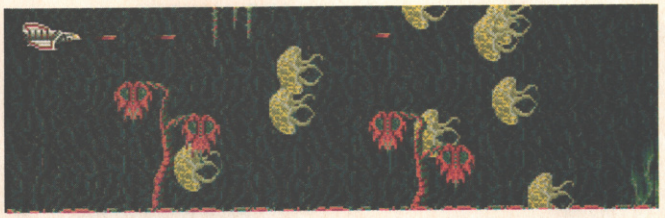
MENACE

Publisher Sizzlers
Price £9.99
Release Out now

History time again – *Menace* is the seminal first game from DMA Design, the people who went on to bring you *Lemmings*. It's, er, rather less original than that game, being a simple (in fact, the word 'simple' is itself almost too complicated to describe it) shoot-'em-up in the style of *Nemesis* and *R-Type*. It's a one-way horizontal scroller with lovely graphics (a different style for each of the six levels) which at first seem to present a tough obstacle to your spaceship, until you realise that they're only there for decoration – you can fly right through everything except the top and bottom walls with no ill effect. All that leaves to worry about is the aliens, who come at you in waves of set-pattern movements and leave behind some rudimentary power-ups when you shoot complete groups. The game's most innovative touch is having two difficulty levels, but giving you double points for tackling the second one.

Actually, level one is hard enough for most people with the one life you're provided with (unless you've got an autofiring joystick which eases matters quite dramatically), which means that you'll get a pretty long life out of the game, assuming you don't get bored with it inside the first two hours. Which you probably will, to be honest, but there you go.

● *STUART CAMPBELL*



***Menace* – jellyfish baddies, but little of the genius that was to create *Lemmings*...**

THE BOTTOM LINE

Pretty but utterly generic blaster that's frustratingly hard if you don't have autofire and pretty dull if you do. Stick with The Hit Squad's *R-Type*.

57 PERCENT

AIR LAND SEA

Publisher: Electronic Arts
Price: £30.99
Release: Out now

This one brings together in a single compilation three environmentally varied simulations which were previously available individually in full-price (and then budget, in *F/A-18 Interceptor*'s case) form.

Unlike most compilations released these days, however, there's pleasingly little sign of compromise in *ALS*'s packaging. Here, all three original full-blown manuals sit alongside the appropriate copy-protection devices in a fittingly chunky box. A compilation's only ever as good as its parts though, so let's take a look at them...

IN THE AIR...

Here we have *F/A-18 Interceptor*, which simulates the Navy F/A-18 Hornet and the Air Force F-16 Fighting Falcon. This looked smarter than Einstein about four years ago, even though the bogies on screen are rarely larger than the ones you'd pick from your nose, and the scenery's as pleasantly breathtaking as a punch in the stomach. The missions are pretty much at the shallow end of the pool, commencing with a take off and landing on an aircraft carrier before being allowed to dogfight handfuls of enemy fighters and escort VIP-bearing aircraft.

Taking off with *F/A-18 Interceptor*, four years on and *still* a great flight sim.

Despite the limitations this is still a great game, and the reason is simple – the fighters in *F/A-18 Interceptor* are fun to fly (pump up the volume and choose one of the many external viewpoints, and any shortcomings are soon forgotten), and that's good enough for me.

F/A-18 Interceptor was created by Bob Dinnerman, who went on to produce a version called *Jetfighter* for the IBM PC and compatibles before enhancing it no end and arriving at *Jetfighter II*, which is coming to the Amiga early next year through US Gold. In the meantime, you can't go wrong here.

ON THE LAND...

This is *Indianapolis 500* – the simulation. And what a hoot it is. I love it. It feels great. I tell you what, here's a playing tip and a half – pump up the volume to the max and *Indianapolis 500* is just the business. It sounds so realistic you wouldn't believe it. The racing noises are so impressive, with proper fading and the like as the other cars race by (or, preferably, you race by the other cars).

The lone Indianapolis 500 course has absolutely no right-hand bends

Nearly as much style as *Formula One Grand Prix* – it's *Indy 500*.

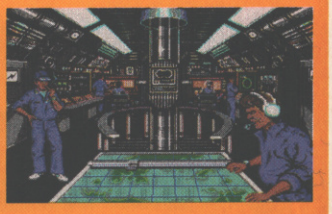
(unless of course you turn around and race the other way, stopping around the starting line and wait, patiently, until the other cars come round, then ram the cocky moustachioed beggers, building roadblocks from the damaged cars and causing some major pile-ups until only your car remains...) but that doesn't stop this being one of the great racing games. The replays (and the thumping-good Rob Hubbard soundtrack) are great too.

Indianapolis 500 isn't a patch on *Formula One Grand Prix*, but by crikey it's fun.

(And for the record, the authors – Papyrus – are currently working on another sporty simulation for EA. Hurrah!)

AND UNDER THE SEA...

Last it's the turn of *688 Attack Sub*. Mmm, yes. On the surface, commanding a submarine seems like a pretty dull job to me. And, unfortunately, *688 Attack Sub* is nothing like the other two simulations in this pack. No, this one's presented pretty much as a 'traditional' buttons and knobs simulator, with its functions selected from a uninspired central view of a submarine's deck.



Oh dear. *688* might be the 'deepest' sim here – it's also the most tedious.

Atmosphere, unlike the volume of disk accessing, is sadly lacking. There are no novel visual or sonic effects to impress (the sonar 'ping' isn't too bad, but that's about it on the sound front) – just flat, unimaginative screens bearing a few dials and simple instrumentation. I'd preferred to have seen some exciting external views, with murky atmospheric waters and the like instead of this tedious technical stuff. Some cinematic intercuts of enemy activity and the like would have been skill, too.

As it stands, then, *688 Attack Sub* represents a bit of a non-malignant growth inside an otherwise healthy compilation package.

● *GARY PENN*

THE BOTTOM LINE

There are a couple of top-notch simulations on offer here but the price is still far too high. You could probably pick up a copy of *Indianapolis 500* on the cheap – and it must be due for individual budgetisation soon – and you can certainly get *F/A-18* for under a tenner, so

71 PERCENT

4 WHEEL DRIVE

Publisher: Gremlin
Price: £29.99
Release: Out now

Compilations, eh? I mean, just what is the point? Probably to provide you, Joe Public, with the chance to scoop up some presently un-owned games on the cheap whilst Joe Software Company rake in a bit of extra cash on the side.

Joe Software Company, in this case, has surreptitiously slipped four of its best driving sims in a 190 x 235 x 35mm cardboard box under the dubious title of *4 Wheel Drive* in a bid for an extra bob or two. First up is *Lotus Esprit Turbo Challenge* which, it has to be said, isn't really that far behind its famous sequel. It still features the same split screen two player option, the graphics are equally smooth and the game still as instantly playable as ever. The most noticeable differences between this and the later game lie in the less varied tracks and the one player mode which fruitlessly fills half the screen only. Still, it's good stuff.

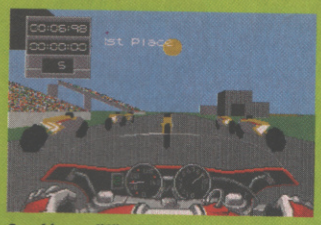
The rest of the compilation is far less tempting, however. *Toyota Celica GT Rally* gives a *Test Drive*-style in-car view with the computer shrieking "Left" and "Right" at appropriate moments for added realism. As with most 'in-car' games though, the end result is a little too jerky and the controls a little too unrealistic for most people's comfort.

Team Suzuki is the *Indy 500* of the motorcycle world, with enough tweakable options, enough speed and enough true-to-life tracks to theoretically keep you hooked for ages. Provided, that is, you could ever get used to the controls, used to the spinning scenery, and used to the fact that you have to turn ridiculously early into corners; three impediments that will take even theoretically ages-er to get used to. Still, great if you'd like a slightly frustrating challenge.

And then there's *Combo Racer* – an *OutRun*-style sidecar racing simulation. Uppers? Very very fast, lots of tracks, and a track editor. Downers? Boring graphics and crap sound. The corners are too sharp – usually veering right off the edge of the screen – and the two player mode where both players control the same sprite is hilariously impossible. Chronically average and dated.

That then, is your fill. Not particularly awe-inspiring, really.

● *RICH PELLEY*



***Suzuki* – so difficult to control, Gremlin had to come up with a trainer disk to let people get anywhere with it!**

***Combo Racer* – boring graphics, crap sound and too tight corners. (Not a great deal going for it really).**

***Toyota Rally* – rallys are always lots of fun, but the real high point has to be the computer shouting at you!**

***Lotus Turbo Challenge* – only half the screen is used in one-player mode, the game's only real downside.**

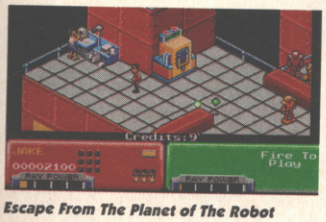
THE BOTTOM LINE

One good, one OK but far too hard and two not very good driving games. To coin a phrase, not a particularly awe-inspiring compilation, really.

56 PERCENT

ESCAPE FROM THE PLANET OF THE ROBOT MONSTERS

Publisher Re-Spray
Price £7.99
Release Out now



***Escape From The Planet of The Robot Monsters* – the longest Amiga game name in history, or *what*?**

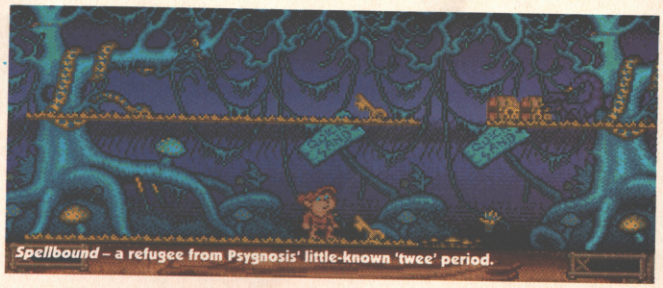
Domark's re-release label hasn't made much of an impact on the budget market to date, a fact probably attributable in equal measures to the suspect quality of most of the games and the fact that pretty much all of them have already been released by the Doms on compilations (sometimes on more than one compilation, come to that). That might just possibly change with the release of this fab little arcade game, converted from a Tengen coin-op which never achieved the success it deserved. It's a very simple little shoot-'em-up runaround in play, with your objective being to blast through huge numbers of enemy robots on each of, ooh, dozens of levels, rescuing kidnapped scientists and perpetrating gratuitous vandalism on the alien bases where they're held as you go along (it's almost like a 3D version of *Robotron* in some ways). What makes it great is the sheer no-nonsense fast-action fun of it all, as well as the neat cartoony presentation and the attractive, brightly-coloured graphics which pack a lot of detail into their small dimensions. There are loads of really nice animation touches too, which add greatly to the atmosphere without ever getting in the way or slowing things down, and generally *EFTPOTRM* just gets on with the business of giving you a game instead of trying to be big or hard or clever and impressing you with parallax this or copperlist that or light-sourced the other. This is simply classic computer game entertainment, and I love it.

● *STUART CAMPBELL*

THE BOTTOM LINE

There's probably a question mark over lasting appeal, but who cares when a game's this much good honest fun? I certainly don't, and for eight quid neither should you.

83 PERCENT



***Spellbound* – a refugee from Psygnosis' little-known 'twee' period.**

SPELLBOUND

Publisher Sizzlers
Price £9.99
Release Out now

Hmm. This reminds me uncomfortably of last month's *Barbarian 2*, for no particularly good reason other than that it's a horribly boring platforms-and-ladders arcade adventure from Psygnosis. Despite some pleasantly twee graphics in a classic Psygnosis style, *Spellbound* is an incredibly uneventful romp which is especially deficient in the sound department – indeed I only noticed it had any sound at all when playing it very late one night in a soundproofed room with the volume turned up really high in what was actually an attempt to evoke a bit of atmosphere by having lots of loud hissing coming from the monitor (to simulate the spooky jungle the game is set in), and a couple of timid beeps jumped out at me without any sort of warning.

The basic gameplay is sort of a bit similar to Code Masters' *Dizzy* titles, but without the interesting mind-bending puzzle element – most of the time it's just a matter of traipsing back and forth going up and down lifts (you can't jump) collecting keys to open chests and firing repeatedly at not-very-dangerous baddies who take about a million hits to kill nonetheless. The playing area on screen is tiny, and so is the amount of fun you'll have if you buy this game.

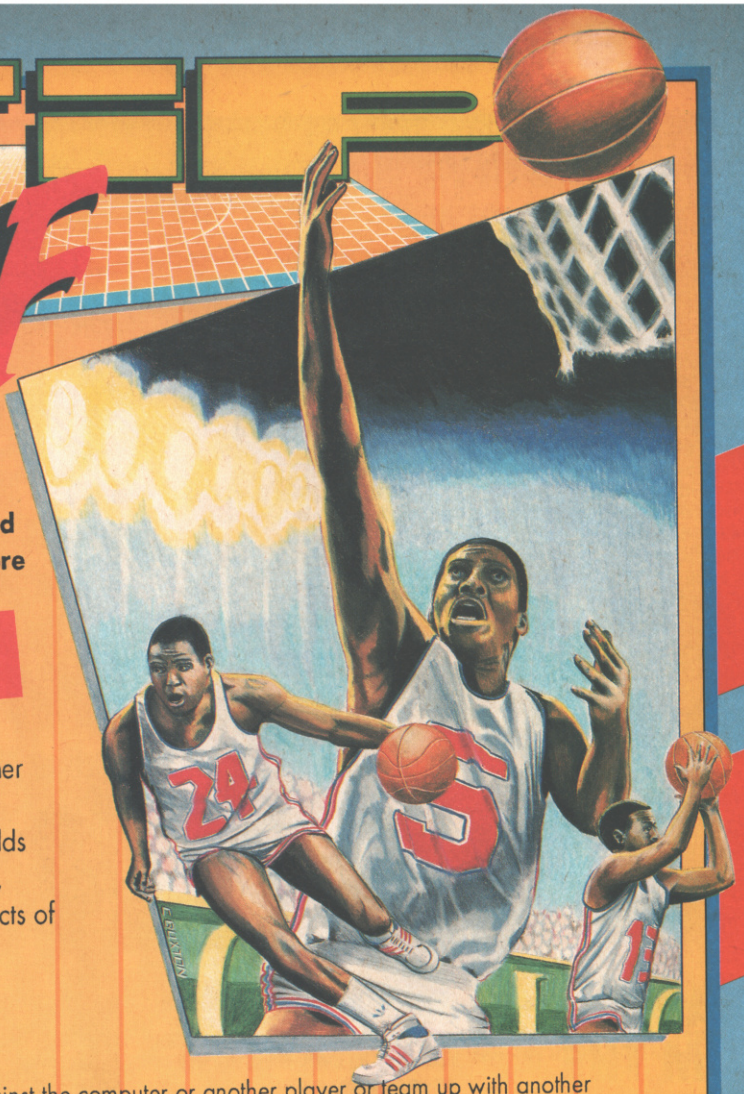
● *STUART CAMPBELL*

THE BOTTOM LINE

Gameplay so shallow it makes *Deathbringer* look like *Populous 2*, and a lack of excitement so total from the word 'go' it's as if someone released an incredibly early demo version by mistake. Steer well clear.

28 PERCENT

TIP OFF



The sheer pace of the game, end to end action and tactical game play is the core of TIP OFF, a basketball simulation -

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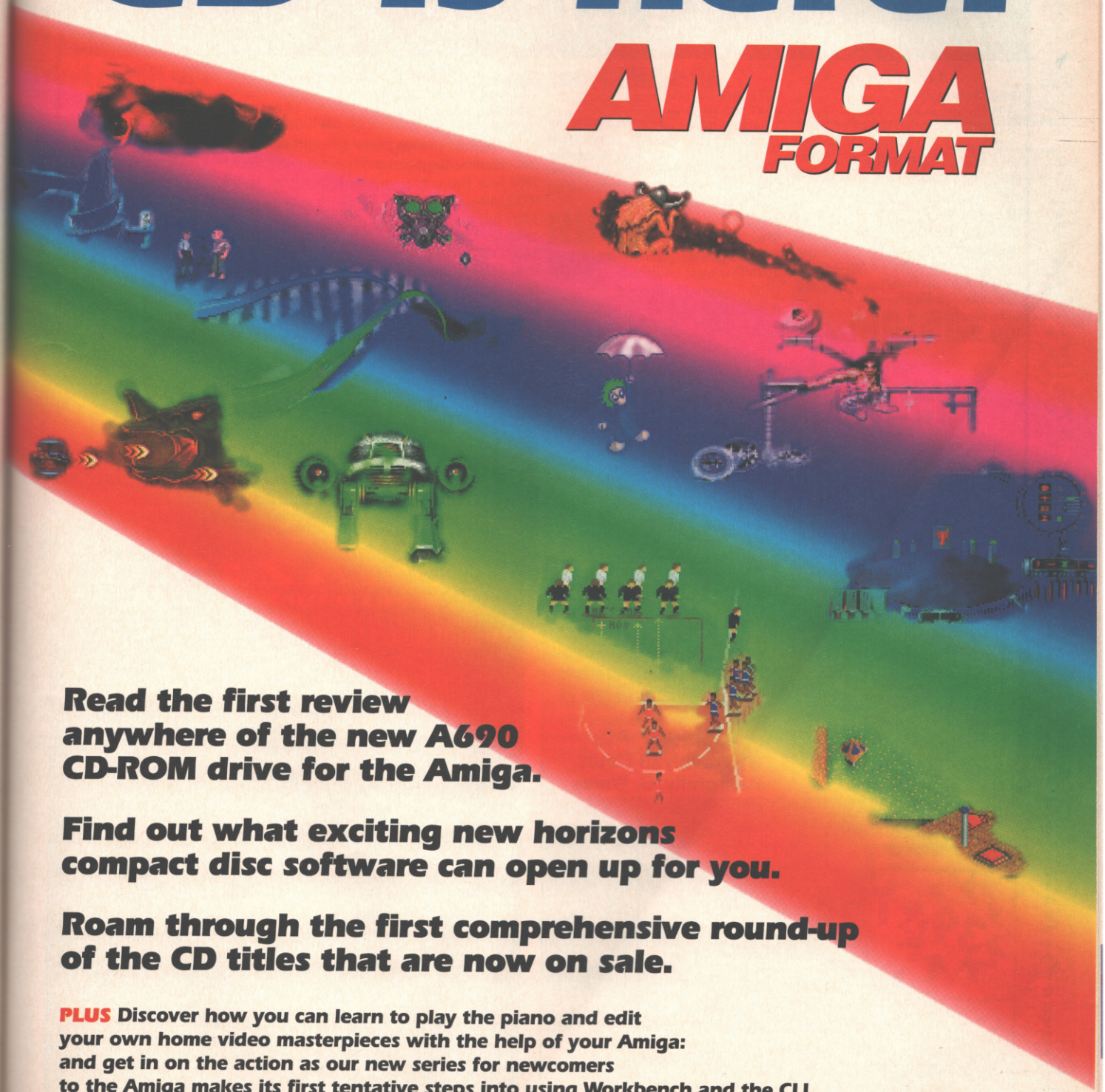

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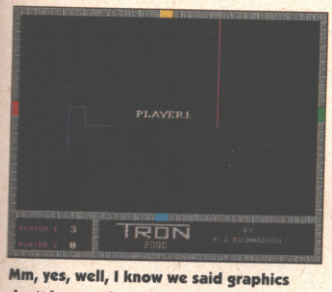
Well, here we all are again in the wonderful world of Public Domain, land of the free. We've been running PD reviews since issue one, but for the new readers amongst you, a bit of a recap. Public Domain is free software. You get it from PD libraries (check the ads) for a minimal charge. And much of it is excellent. Your host, Stuart Campbell.

Good old PD, eh? What would we do without it in those difficult apres-Christmas months when money is tight and 'proper' software seems more expensive than ever (for the very good reason that, much of the time, it IS more expensive than ever)? Mind you, that's not an affliction confined to the commercial ranks – more and more of the 'PD' that we're getting for this column is made up of shareware, licenceware, exclusiveware and all sorts of other stuff that you actually have to pay for. Are people losing sight of the PD principle? Tell us...

TRON 2000
(Virus Free)



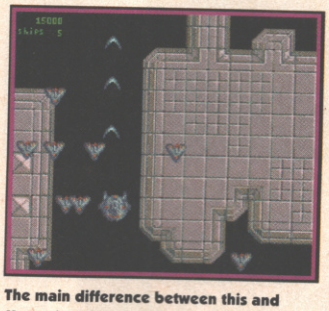
Mm, yes, well, I know we said graphics don't have to be brilliant, but...

Another Exclusiveware title from Virus Free, *Tron 2000* is also yet abloodynother Amiga version of that age-old computer game standard, the *Tron*-style (hence the name) light cycle battle. For any 64-year-olds reading who don't know what that means, the basic idea is that you and another player (this version, like most of the PD ones, is for two human players only, with no computer opponent available) control a light-cycle (read 'line') which you race around an arena. The cycles leave trails behind them, and crashing into either your own or your opponent's trail, or the walls of the arena, is fatal. That's it, really, except that in this version you can also play the game in what it calls 'tunnel mode', which means that the arena has a couple of holes in its walls. Drive into one of them and you reappear from the other one, confounding your opponent and more often than not making him crash into a wall in sheer surprise. What else do you need to know?

Well, there's no 'nitro boost' option to give you a quick burst of speed (the main pillar of the arcade game's strategy), no even remotely interesting graphics (two pixel-wide lines racing across a completely featureless backdrop is the sum total of the game's visual appeal), and basically no bloody fun whatsoever. Exclusiveware? More like Expectorantware (look it up), I think you'll find.

VERDICT: Twice as boring as you think, and the most inexplicable choice for an Exclusiveware release imaginable. You need a friend to play it with, but if you subject anyone to a bout of this, they won't be your friend for much longer. *

NU
(VIRUS Free, disk 2030)

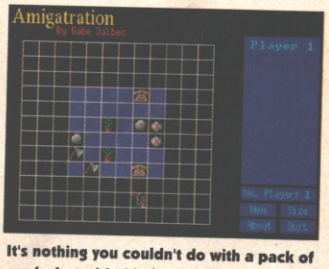


The main difference between this and *Xenon* is that in *Nu*, the ground is deadly to the touch. Narrow manouevering ahoy!

Shock horror probe! A PD vertically-scrolling shoot-'em-up that isn't written with *Shoot-'Em-Up Construction Kit*! *Nu* is a stylishly-presented simple little blaster with something of both the look and feel of *Xenon*. There's nothing out of the ordinary in the up-down-left-right-shoot-the-baddies-and-don't-crash-into-the-scenery gameplay, but it's very tricky and the level of difficulty keeps you coming back to it repeatedly in the best 'just a little bit further this time' tradition. Beyond that, I'm afraid my book of 'Interesting Things To Say About Completely Generic Vertically-scrolling Shoot-'em-ups' fails me. This is definitely right up there with the very best of its type (*Mission X, Air Ace II* etc) and it'll entertain even-tempered zap fans for a more than acceptable period of time.

VERDICT: A good one, but from now on how about a little more imagination, programmers? ****

HUMDINGER – THE REVENGE
(Telescan)



It's nothing you couldn't do with a pack of cards, but with this (one of 40 games on the pack) at least the graphics are nice...

We reviewed the first *Humdinger* compilation a few issues ago, and the bottom line was more or less that when you're getting 41 games for a fiver, you've somehow brilliant all the same. It's all very fast and very slick, and I haven't enjoyed a PD game so much since *Asteroids*.

VERDICT: Incredibly basic gameplay but superbly well done. *****

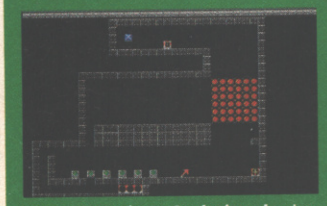
DARK THINGS
(Virus Free)

I think we're going to have to start a new column soon called 'PD That Isn't Actually PD At All But It's The Nearest Description That Fits It So It'll Have To Do' to cover all the shareware/exclusiveware/licenceware/fishpasteware that people are putting out in what I suspect is a campaign to turn the PD market into such a confusing copyright minefield that it eventually collapses under the weight of its own rulebook, leaving the way clear for lots more £35 movie licences and suchlike.

But anyway, *Dark Things* is the latest release in Virus Free's Exclusiveware series of games which sell for £3 a time, with £1 going to the programmer as a royalty. After a shaky start the series has been gradually improving, and this game is easily the best one so far. It's very very simple platform-leaping stuff, with the objective being to get to the end of each of a series of short levels packed with obstacles and enemies, which always appear in the same places and at the same times. You might think this would make it all pretty easy, but in fact it's one of the most maddeningly difficult and addictive PD games I've ever seen. It's so fiendishly-designed that the slightest slip will more often than not result in death, depositing you back at the start of the level. Luckily, the levels are all short enough not to make this a terminally frustrating experience, instead you curse and swear and vow to sort out that rottweiler/bouncing goblin/hole in the ground next time round. And so it goes. The graphics are lovely (albeit in a functional kind of way) throughout, and the sound is minimalist but

***Dark Things* – it's fast, it's pretty, it's incredibly addictive, it's only three quid. This is what we in the journalism trade like to call 'a bargain'.**

CYADONIA
(Deja Vu, disk LPD67)



Three screens in on *Cyadonia* and we're stuck. Anyone know how to do this one?

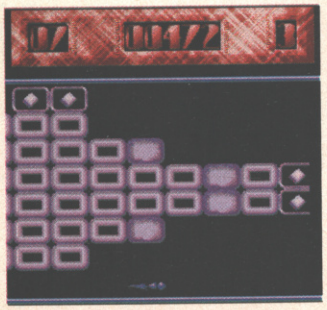
More Licenceware (ie you get it from PD libraries but you're not allowed to copy it) from Deja Vu, and this time it's weird. Essentially a puzzle game closer to Demonware's *The Power* than anything else, *Cyadonia* sets you down in a maze of zones, each with their own individual objectives. The common theme in most of them is to collect things and then get to the exit, but complicating matters are lots of obstacles to negotiate and deadly traps which you have to work out how to disable. It's all suitably evil, but with a few relatively easy screens thrown in to let you get the hang of it. Unfortunately, these very quickly give way to horribly difficult ones, but by then you're sufficiently hooked to stick at it for a while, and the sense of achievement when you finally manage to get through some of the tough stuff is a deeply spiritual and moving experience. The graphics are – ideally for this sort of game, I think – tiny little things, allowing for some really mindbending screens, but they serve their purpose well enough, and everything zips around at an impressive rate for maximum playability. You'll need a megabyte (as with almost all of these AMOS-type things), but if you've got the memory, give this a try.

VERDICT: The same basic formula as *The Power* but a lot more fun (although without the fab music), this is a groovy and engrossing puzzler that's worth a couple of quid of anyone's money. ****

really got nothing much to complain about if they're not all world-beaters. Much the same applies to this sequel (this time it's just 40 games for the same price, due to fluctuations in the exchange rate between Sterling and the German Mark), but it has to be said that this one isn't quite up to the same standards as its predecessor. While there are still some very good games on here (most notably the fab *Puzznic* clone *Zeus*), the general level of quality is distinctly lower. All the same, the time it'll take you simply to play through every game on the compilation once is at least as much as you'll get from many other titles, so for quantity alone it won't hurt you to give this a go.

VERDICT: A bit like those awful old 50-game tapes you used to get on the 8-bits, the sheer weight of games on *Humdinger – The Revenge* makes up somewhat for the iffy quality of most of them. Don't expect too much and you won't be disappointed. ***

TSCH
(17 Bit, disk 1426)



You might think *Tsch* looks a bit boring, but just give it a try in 'llama' (please!) mode and you'll soon change your tune.

Hurrah! Some proper PD, PD that you're allowed to copy, PD that doesn't have a million other games on the disk with it, PD that isn't written with some commercial clone-'em-up utility program, PD that's just plain, simple, honest, straightforward, no copyright, real PD. (Well, shareware, at least, but it's about as close as you get in this month's selection). I was beginning to think there wasn't any left. Anyway, *Tsch* (dig that crazy title, Inspector Tuppence And The Sexy Firemen fans) is a slightly odd little arcade game, sort of a puzzle that isn't a puzzle meets a shoot-'em-up with no shooting in it. Confused? You should be.

What happens in *Tsch* is that you zip along in your little spaceship through a sort-of maze, which is made up of blocks which have varying effects on your ship's flight. In amongst those are gems which you have to collect by flying into them, while avoiding the deadly obstacles which are usually scattered around. Each screen is played at one of a variety of speeds, and is preceded by a quick run through the maze during which your ship can't be destroyed. In a bizarre touch, you can also choose one of three 'strobe levels' at which to play the game ('gnu', 'sheep' and 'llama', if you're interested), which dictates how often the screen flashes during play. At maximum level, the whole thing becomes a pulsating, hypnotic, and downright nauseating mess, which will in all probability cause serious bodily harm to epileptics and those of nervous dispositions everywhere, but that aside *Tsch* is a novel and really pretty sexy little game. Get your shades on and grab a copy.

VERDICT: Very original and nicely-presented arcade game, as classy a piece of PD as you get these days. Damn good fun. ***

AMIGA POWER COMPO WINNERS

Alright, alright, you can stop phoning us up every second of the day in desperate attempts to find out if you've won an Ocean polo shirt or not. We've finally managed to find the time to plough through the huge mounds of competition entries which were threatening to take over half of the office and pick a few winners. So without further ado, let's name those names...

WIN A JOB AT BULLFROG
All the entries for this issue two comp are still being analysed by Peter Molyneux at Bullfrog, but the winner should be chosen soon, honest.

IT WASN'T ME (NOBODY SAW ME DO IT AND YOU CAN'T PROVE ANYTHING)
Lots and lots of entries for this competiton to write a Bart Simpson rap beginning with the words: 'Yo, hey dudes, what's happening man? This here's young Bart's master plan...' ...most of which were, it has to be said, pretty awful on the ears. (Isn't there anyone out there with any sense of rhyme, rhythm or iambic pentameter?)

Far away in front of the crowd, though, was a very groovy entry from Justin Scharvona of Flookersbrook (he practically had it won just for coming from such a ridiculous-sounding place anyway) in Chester. We should eventually get round at some point to rewarding young Justin for his effort with a rather lovely TV, video and satellite dish package courtesy of those awfully nice Ocean people.

TROJAN COMPETITION
Issue six gave you the opportunity to win one of 10 Trojan Phaser light gun set-ups by answering a few simple gun-related questions, to which the answers were:
1. Walther PPK (we also accepted a couple of other responses for this one)
2. Magnum .45
3. Uzi 9mm
Prizes go to Philip Stoneman (we think) of Sheffield (learn to write or get your mum to help you, Philip, you nearly didn't win because we couldn't read your name and address), Jonathan Dickinson of North Walsham, Jack Dickson of Glasgow, Iain Lowson of Maryhill, Chris Perkins of Romney Marsh, Giles Bennett (nasty parents, Giles) of Broadstairs, Stewart Coaker of Bournemouth, Brian Murphy of Dartford, Mr J.E. Holmes (and from now on we're only giving prizes to people with first names, so be warned. You don't see us writing reviews under the names Mr M.P. Bielby, Mr M.J. Ramshaw, Mr S.D.W. Campbell etc, do you? So why the formal stuff?) of Wickford and David Hayes of Daisyhill in Bolton.

AMIGA POWER FOR PRESIDENT
Act Of God Dept. Ahem. Bit of a cock-up on the competition front here, it has to be said. The prize for this issue six comp was every Mirrorsoft game still available in this country (so far so good), and also every Mirrorsoft game released for the next five years. Unfortunately, if you've read the news pages this month you'll know that Mirrorsoft have just rather inconveniently gone bust, so 'every Mirrorsoft game released for the next five years' isn't going to amount to a heck of a lot. Still, there's a good £800 or so worth of prize as it is, and we'll bung in a few other little bits and pieces to soften the blow a little bit for the winner. And that winner is one of hundreds of you who correctly came up with these answers:
1. In his head
2. '...they've all got it infamy'
3. Uncle Joe
...namely Simon Reid of Blackburn. Er, congratulations, Simon.
And that's all we've got space for!

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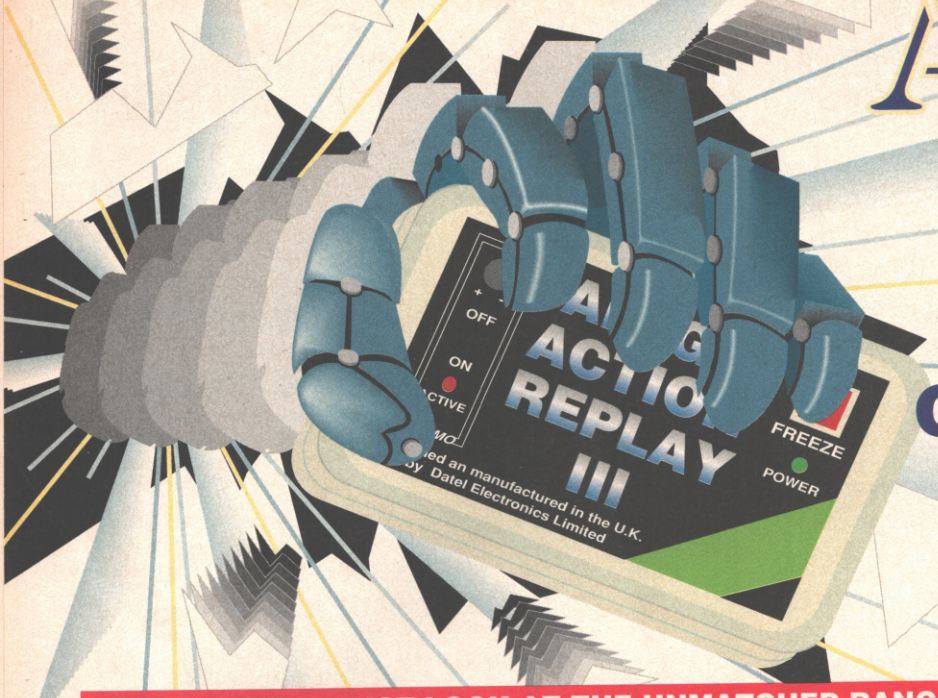

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DEFINITION OF sound

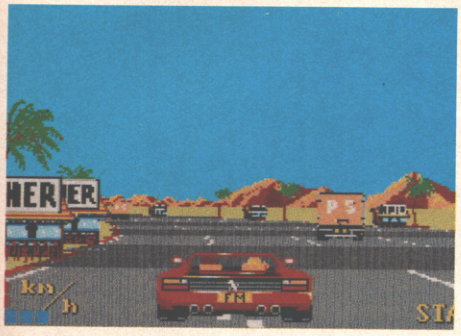
VROOM & BRAKE FAST

Yes, it's Definition Of Sound time again, your definitive guide to Amiga games by genre. This month, racing fever...

On your marks, get set...go! Every Amiga driving game ever lines up on the starting grid for the ultimate race – the one to see who's the top Amiga rubber-burner.

If you take the view that computer games can be divided into two basic categories – fantasy games, where the player takes a role they're never likely to experience for real, (such as battling against space aliens, commanding Napoleon's army at the Battle Of Waterloo, or being a small robot fish), and simulation games which offer the chance to replicate a real-life experience without the danger/expense/bother – then the driving game is one of the truly seminal concepts. Probably the first 'simulation'-genre game to hit the arcades (unless you count *Pong* as a tennis sim, that is), Atari's *Night Driver* brought you the remarkably lifelike experience of driving at high speed in pitch darkness along a road consisting of lots of little white fenceposts (late-night motorway veterans will know what we mean), while *Sprint* (followed in quick succession by *Sprint 2*, *Sprint 4* and *Sprint 8*) paved the way for the phenomenally successful *Super Sprint* and its legion of imitators, as well as pioneering the simultaneous multiple-player idea which is now a part of almost every new coin-op. To this day, practically every driving game is a derivation of one of those two groundbreaking styles, and this month we're taking a look at the former – the ones that really put you in the driver's seat.

To be honest, after *Night Driver* the coin-op driving market didn't exactly explode into life. Sega's pair of overhead-view classics *Monaco GP* and *Turbo* ruled the roost largely unchallenged until 1982, when Atari hit back with the game that laid down the ground rules for video racing. *Pole Position* introduced a real racing circuit for the first time (the Fujiyama course in Japan, which incidentally lies in the shadow of Mount Fuji, inspiration for Atari's corporate logo, mountain fans), the second-person perspective (where you viewed the action from just behind your car), and the blinding speed that really brought home the adrenalin-pumping



Two similar-looking games here, but the gulf in quality between *Lotus Turbo etc 2* (top) and *OutRun* is a big one

Formula One thrills that had been missing until then. It's *Pole Position* that still provides the inspiration for most Amiga racers, and the best ones are usually those which come closest to replicating its phenomenal addictive qualities and brilliant learning curve. Which is why ***Crazy Cars 2*** is so crap, but we're getting ahead of ourselves here.

LET'S HANG ON

If it's speed and thrills you're after, you can't do much better than ***Super Hang-On***. Programmer ZZKJ's reputation may have slipped slightly after his recent half-hearted stab at *Smash TV*, but he will be remembered for evermore in the annals of Amiga gaming history for this superb conversion of Sega's moderately successful motorbiking coin-op. It was graphically beautiful, with loads of variation over the four courses and 40-odd stages, but the most important thing was the sheer exhilaration of tearing around tight bends and over blind hills at speeds which varied from 'far too fast' to 'just plain ridiculous'. The difficulty level was pitched perfectly, allowing players of all abilities to make enough progress to get them completely hooked, then hitting them with a really brutal stage full of hairpin bends and disastrously-placed roadside obstacles. Currently at No 41 in the AMIGA POWER All-Time Top 100, *Super Hang-On* is a game which is as excellent today as it was the day it was released, and that's pretty damn excellent.

SINGING IN THE RAINIER

The next-closest effort in terms of *Pole Position*-ness is US Gold's recent ***Super Monaco GP***. While nominally a conversion of another Sega coin-op, this Grand Prix racer – also by ZZKJ, funnily enough – bears very little resemblance to the technically stunning arcade machine, being instead a pretty straightforward foot-to-the-floor affair which is in fact structured very similarly to the old Atari classic. As a replication of *Super Monaco GP* it fails pretty spectacularly, but as a replication of *Pole Position* it's not bad at all, providing plenty of no-nonsense drive-as-fast-as-possible-and-don't-hit-anything high jinks. You could, as we'll find out shortly, do a lot worse.

THE CIRCUS-CIRCUS METHOD

The only other real contender in the genre is ***Continental Circus*** from Virgin, which, amazingly, wasn't programmed by ZZKJ. Another F1-circuit multi-lap arcade-orientated racer, *Continental Circus* is a fast-moving and challenging game, let down slightly by graphics which you could generously describe as 'a bit on the crude side'. Still, it's plenty of fun to play, and it boasts a couple of novel touches, such as the occasional rainstorm which makes the track slippery and the way that when your car crashes into something it bursts into flames, but you still have a chance to get to the pits and save it instead of it just exploding. A neat if unremarkable little game that's well worth having at its new budget price point.

THE LOTUS POSITION

Moving away from Formula One but sticking with the multi-lap arcade-orientated bit brings us to *Lotus Esprit Turbo Challenge*. This lovely game from Gremlin takes the fast-moving undulating road from *Super Hang-On*, adds a slight rallying element in the shape of obstacles on the road, limited fuel and a battle for placing rather than one against time, but remains seated firmly in the arcade thrills camp. A two-player split-screen mode adds greatly to the lasting appeal (which was doing quite nicely in any case) and helps make this perhaps the definitive all-round driving game on the Amiga. The only real drawback is that you only get to use half the screen when in one-player mode, but five minutes into play you stop noticing that as the superb racing action demands all of your attention. And as if all this wasn't enough, you even get a dinky little shoot-'em-up mini-game hidden away in the code too for when you get bored of driving all the time!

For many people this was the best race game of all-time until the arrival of the sequel, ***Lotus Turbo Challenge 2***. The follow-up went slightly more in the direction of a sports-car version of *Super Hang-On*, with a race against time through numerous stages of varying landscape replacing the circuit-lapping of the first game, but it still retained the all-important playability while adding some new features, most notably the dramatic weather effects which ranged from wind and snow storms to the truly impressive fog banks. The graphics (full-screen this time for the single player) were beautiful, but the game suffered slightly in the same way as Gremlin's other driving game sequel, *Supercars 2*, in as much the difficulty was upped to make things tougher for experienced players, but in doing so the programmers made everything feel less 'friendly' and enjoyable. More of a 'proper' driving game than an arcade game, in that you really did have to slow down and use the brakes sometimes, *Lotus 2* doesn't quite, for most of us here, live up to the phenomenally high standards of its parent as far as sheer 'fun-to-play-ness' goes.

"Cisco Heat – a classic example of how not to do a coin-op"

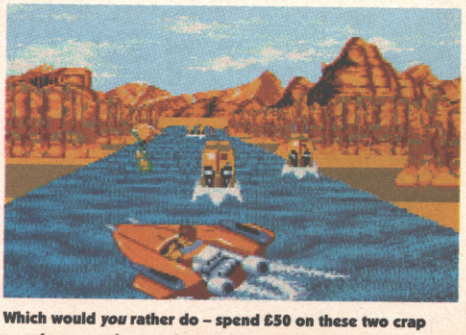
THIS ONE'LL RUN AND RUN

Of course, if you're talking about arcade games, there's one serious rival to *Pole Position* as certainly the biggest, if not the best, coin-op driving game. *OutRun* is very probably Sega's biggest ever arcade success, so when US Gold announced the acquisition of the conversion rights the industry held its collective breath in anticipation. Some dire 8-bit and ST ports lowered hopes dramatically, but when the Amiga version finally appeared, it wasn't too dreadful. Crude-looking but playable, Amiga ***OutRun*** made a creditable if ultimately unsuccessful stab at reproducing the coin-op experience. USG had another bite at the cherry when Sega released a rather less successful arcade sequel, ***Turbo Out Run***. This time they got a lot closer to the look of the game, and improved the playability too, but at the end of the day it was still all too slow and jerky to really convey the manic out-of-control excitement of the real thing. Also, in both cases, long loading pauses between stages went a long way to wrecking any chance of the games building up a head of steam as far as adrenalin charges went. That being the case, USG had one last (?) try with a second sequel, this time of their own devising. ***OutRun Europa*** benefited from not having to try and emulate loads of expensive dedicated arcade hardware, but it suffered from not being backed up with loads of tried-and-tested Sega arcade gameplay either. Dodgy control, insipid graphics, frustrating and unrealistic gameplay and a complete lack of imagination left this a race game devoid of character and atmosphere, and one that was out-of-date the day it came out.

DEFINITION OF sound

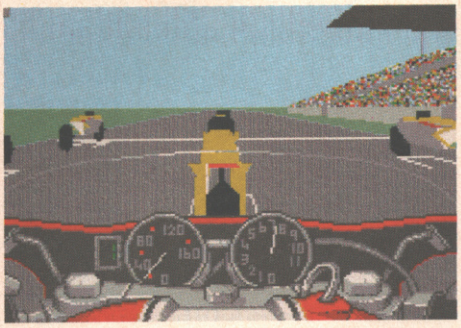
CISCO FEVER

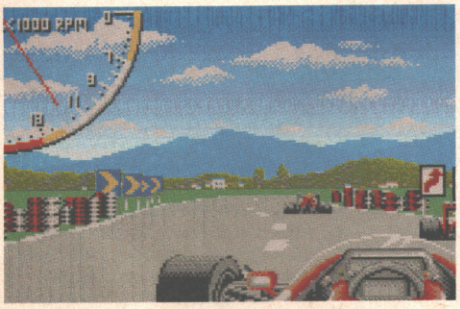
The most recent coin-op conversion effort was Image Works' (RIP) attempt at Jaleco's San Francisco-based cop car chase ***Cisco Heat***. In many ways, this was the perfect illustration of the problems inherent in converting this kind of thing for the Amiga – huge graphics, beefy sound, steering-wheel control, pretty minimal gameplay, exactly the kind of stuff our beloved machine isn't very good at. Image Works fell into these traps (especially the one relating to control method – the *Lotus* games set a benchmark for controllability, and anything less friendly is doomed to failure from the outset), but they also didn't do a very good job of converting the arcade's gameplay, undemanding as it was. All the maps (supposedly an accurate representation of the San Francisco



Which would *you* rather do – spend £50 on these two crap arcade conversions, or have 50 goes on the real coin-ops?

DEFINITION OF sound





Two very different styles, executed to a very similar level. *Team Suzuki* (top picture) is a fun but flawed serious bike sim, while *Super Monaco GP* (below) is an arcade conversion which is a good game but a useless copy of the coin-op.

as effective (with that added element of risking serious personal injury), as ***RVF Honda*** from MicroStyle shows. A beautifully smooth and demanding circuit race more in the vein of *Formula One Grand Prix* and that ilk, *RVF* nonetheless manages a high level of accessible and addictive speedfreakery behind a facade of intelligence. Gremlin's ***Team Suzuki*** performs a similar trick, but it cranks the speed up to almost ridiculous levels, so much so that Gremlin eventually had to release a trainer disk for it so that ordinary players could make some progress. Still, it's a stylish looker, with impressive vector graphics and lots of nice detail, so if you're looking for a real challenge this one could be well worth a pop.

VROOM WITH A VIEW

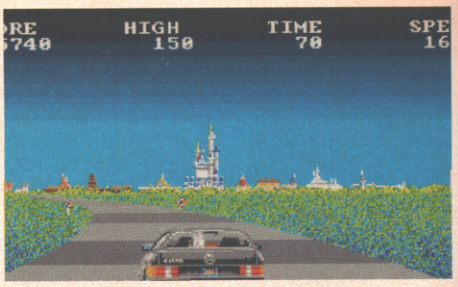
Team Suzuki marks a step away from straight arcade style, and indeed there are many games which forget about simple left-right-dodging stuff and have a go at truly simulating the feel of driving a real high-performance car, ending up closer in style to a flight sim than a coin-op racer, complete with bulky manuals, outside camera views and lots of associated technical frippery. That's not to say that they can't still be great fun, and ***Indy 500*** certainly fits into that category.

An incredibly detailed reproduction of (surprise!) the Indianapolis 500 race; *Indy* offers – like the real thing – a mammoth challenge which calls for phenomenal qualities of endurance as well as driving skill. The limited nature of the Indy race itself makes the computer game perhaps a bit less interesting than it might have been (the corners are all in one direction, and the course is a very dull oval), but all the same this is simply one of the most impressive driving experiences you'll get from your Amiga. It is, after all, number nine in our own All-Time Top 100.

That position, though, could well be under serious threat when we review the Top 100 in a month or two's time from a game which bears a lot of similarities to it. MicroProse's ***Formula One Grand Prix*** received AMIGA POWER's second-highest rating ever (an astonishing 92%) when we reviewed it in issue seven, and a well-deserved mark it was too. This gorgeous, fast and thrilling game features some of the best gameplay and most impressive attention to detail seen in any game of any kind. *F1 GP* is a masterpiece of Amiga programming and design, and after some delays should finally have reached the shops by the time you read this. You really should go out and buy it.

THE JAMES DEAN DRIVING EXPERIENCE

As ever, though, there's another major category of Amiga driving games which we haven't covered yet – Amiga Driving Games Which Are Rubbish. Firmly ensconced in this quintessentially questionable quagmire of quality-free, er, quap (*you're fired -Ed*) we find, of course, *Crazy Cars* (see the Oh Dear... feature in issue six for the full, and we mean this in a very real sense, low-down) and its diabolical sequel *Crazy Cars II*, both inflicted on the world by those zany French dudes at Titus in their pre-great games incarnation. The latter plumbed new depths in unplayability, while the former single-handedly arrested the development of the genre for almost two years.



Not so much *Crazy Cars* as *You'd-have-to-be-crazy-to-buy-it-Cars*, this effort from Titus is just one of a series of lamentable atrocities committed in the name of driving fun.

Then there's Domark's ***Hydra***, not a driving game in the traditional sense (because you're driving a speedboat), but essentially exactly the same concept, except with a different colour of road. Strangely similar in some ways to *Crazy Cars II*, *Hydra* took a poor Atari coin-op and stomped all over it until it was a barely recognisable but fully dreadful Amiga game in its own right. In an eerie foretaste of this event, Domark had given much the same treatment to another Atari coin-op, this time the futuristic tunnel racer ***STUN Runner***. Everyone said the blinding speed and amazing graphics of the arcade game would be utterly impossible to bring to the Amiga in any kind of satisfactory way, and Domark proved them all absolutely correct with a hideous effort which limped and juddered its way along in a thoroughly depressing manner which could have ruined the Amiga (in the eyes of the console-dazzled public, certainly) as a viable vehicle for arcade licences for years to come. Hopefully, it will serve instead, alongside Ocean's useless ***Chase HQ***, as a sharp reminder of just what the machine can't do, and as a valuable indicator of what software houses should (and more importantly shouldn't) be spending all that hard-earned money of theirs (and, also more importantly, ours) on in the future. Some hope...

As for the other sort of driving game of course – the overhead view *Super Sprint*-style, and its derivatives – we'll cover these in a future Def Of Sound. ●

WHEELIE SAYING SOMETHING

Of course, as *Super Hang-On* shows, you needn't rely on cars to get your share of high-octane kicks. Motorbikes can be just as effective (with that added element of risking serious personal injury), as ***RVF Honda*** from MicroStyle shows. A beautifully smooth and demanding circuit race more in the vein of *Formula One Grand Prix* and that ilk, *RVF* nonetheless manages a high level of accessible and addictive speedfreakery behind a facade of intelligence. Gremlin's ***Team Suzuki*** performs a similar trick, but it cranks the speed up to almost ridiculous levels, so much so that Gremlin eventually had to release a trainer disk for it so that ordinary players could make some progress. Still, it's a stylish looker, with impressive vector graphics and lots of nice detail, so if you're looking for a real challenge this one could be well worth a pop.

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NIGEL MANSELL'S GUIDE TO SOME QUITE GOOD DRIVING GAMES

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CONTINENTAL CIRCUS	IMAGE WORKS	£25.99	***
CRAZY CARS	THE HIT SQUAD	£7.99	*
FORMULA ONE GRAND PRIX	MICROPROSE	£34.99	*****
HYDRA	DOMARK	£25.99	*
INDY 500	ELECTRONIC ARTS	comp	****
LOTUS ESPRIT TURBO CHALLENGE	GREMLIN	comp	*****
LOTUS TURBO CHALLENGE 2	GREMLIN	£25.99	****
OUTRUN	KIXX	£7.99	**
OUTRUN EUROPA	US GOLD	£25.99	***
RVF HONDA	MICROSTYLE	deleted	****
STUN RUNNER	DOMARK	£24.99	*
SUPER HANG-ON	THE HIT SQUAD	£7.99	*****
SUPER MONACO GP	US GOLD	comp	***
TEAM SUZUKI	GREMLIN	comp	***
TURBO OUTRUN	KIXX	£7.99	***

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Okay, so we've given you some pretty fab prizes in the past. CDTVs, flying lessons, arcade machines, the entire AMIGA POWER All-Time Top 100 games, a job at Bullfrog, satellite dishes, videos, holidays at EuroDisney, and thousands of pounds worth of software. All fab stuff but, let's face it, nothing that you couldn't have just gone out and bought if you had enough money. So this month we've got something a little bit special for you...

RULES AND REGULATIONS

- The prize is everything in the continent-sized industrial-strength bin bag we've filled – no picking and choosing the bits you want to win.
- And we don't want any of it back, either.
- It would be completely pointless for employees of Future Publishing or their families to enter this comp, as it's all their old rubbish we're giving away in the first place, but they're not allowed to anyway.
- The closing date for the competition is the 28th of February 1992. Any entries received after that date will be thrown in the sack for the winner to sell to mailing-list companies and the Reader's Digest.
- As will all correspondence relating to the competition. The Ed's decision is final, and it'll stay that way!
- And we don't want any angry letters from the winner's parents.

ALL ABOUT YOUR PRIZE

As you can probably imagine, over the space of a year the AMIGA POWER office gets pretty cluttered with all kinds of debris and detritus, until the point when we can't actually open the door for piles of promotional cardboard cut-outs, tacky posters, multiple copies of crap games and dodgy bits of tat of all descriptions. So, with spring in the offing, we decided it was time for a clear-out. We grabbed everything in the office that wasn't nailed down (and mounted a quick raid on some of our sister mags here at Future for good measure), slapped the whole lot in a big bag and were just on the brink of lobbing it all straight out the window when a thought struck us – why not give it all to you, our beloved readers? So that's what we're going to do. Of course, being generous sorts we've thrown in some good stuff too (and a rather special mystery prize that we're not telling you about just yet...), but the whole lot (see the panel over on the right for just a small extract from the near-endless list) can be yours for answering the simple question below.

THE PHENOMENALLY-DIFFICULT QUESTION

It's very simple, really. To win this bumper bonanza bag of bin-fodder, this colossal collection of crap, this mammoth mass of manky old muck, all you have to do is write to us explaining just why in the world you'd possibly want it! Short or long, funny or serious(!), the most convincing plea we receive for this super-large sack of (*That's enough alliteration -Ed*) gets the whole damn lot. Send your entries to 'I've Got A Green Consciousness And It's Not Just The Drink Competition', AMIGA POWER, 29 Monmouth Street, Bath, Avon, BA1 2BW.

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EUROPEAN ORDERS ACCEPTED

It's another month of fear and loathing in the AMIGA POWER letters pages. Read on for accusations of computer sexism, theories about the ever-rising price of software, and a disgusted young person complaining about our use of the word 'crap'. Keep sending those vitriolic opinions, rants, and uncontrolled outbursts. We love them..!

DO THE write THING

● Address your letters to AMIGA POWER, Beaufort Court, 30 Monmouth Street, Bath Avon, BA1 2BW

Dear AMIGA POWER,

I have decided that now is the right time to write to yourselves and have a moan about the ever-increasing price of software. I have had an Amiga now for almost a year, and when I started buying software the average price was around £25, with only a handful of games costing slightly more than this. Recently though, the new software that is coming onto the market has started to rise in price, ie £30 being the average and quite a number of games heading towards the absurd £35 mark. All that we, the consumers, seem to get out of the higher price, however, is a much larger box that's filled with cardboard and totally unnecessary. Every game that is now coming out has a larger box and we are supposed to feel that this justifies such a high price.

I have a full time job and am quite fortunate as I can afford to buy one or maybe two new games a month. However, if this trend of price increases keeps going I am certain that all I will do is wait for a couple of months, by which time a game will start appearing in shops at a lower price. This is irrespective of how good the game is.

I am sure I'm not the only games player that feels like this, and I would be grateful if you could let me know what your views are on this subject.

Yours, Mark Dodwell, Potters Bar

And on the same topic...

Dear AP,

I have discovered a strange phenomenon (*A Publisher Writes: this man can spell 'phenomenon' – give him a job at once*) amongst your pages which seems to have excited no comment from yourselves or your readers. This has been in evidence since the last Budget and involves some fairly outrageous price hiking. With the advent of 17.5 percent VAT, the perceived £25 software barrier was broken and some prices seem to have risen out of all proportion to either inflation or quality of product. Of your nine major game reviews last month, only three were £24.99, two were £25.99, two were £30.99 and the other two were a massive £34.99. The last two mentioned were both straightforward games, one a golf game and one a flight sim. It would be interesting to interview someone from MicroProse alongside a Code Masters representative to find out how such massive differentials occur. Are we being taken for idiots or is there some hidden ingredient that explains such inequalities? (*Hope you found our feature on the Codies last issue enlightening -Ed*)

A year or two ago there was much criticism of record companies for what was considered the excessive price of CDs compared to tape and vinyl. Their reaction was not to decrease the price of CDs, which they agreed were no more expensive to produce than other media, but to increase the price of tapes and vinyl. I wonder if the software business is using similar tactics to bring computer games software more into line with the price of console games, which are often considered unduly expensive and which many software companies now seem to have an interest in producing? Or am I just paranoid?

Yours, John Woodcock, Kelling

Well, that's certainly one of the more interesting theories we've had for the stealthy increase in Amiga game prices over the last year or so, John. We think you might have hit on something there – anyone else have any opinions?

Dear AP,

I enjoyed *Cisco Heat* on coverdisk eight. I also enjoyed *Elvira* and *Welltrix* and *Kap-Othello*. I didn't enjoy killing the *Lamer Exterminator* virus, an unwelcome and unadvertised member of the coverdisk. The mag is all very good and the only one I buy regularly, but is it too much effort to check the disk for a virus? Can you explain to me how to repair the disk, as it's ruined, and also what the virus was doing on the coverdisk anyway?

Yours sincerely, Jason Grove,Wareham

Oh no, here we go again. Every issue we get two or three angry letters or phone calls from people claiming our coverdisk has had a virus on it, and telling us how useless we are. Listen very carefully, 'cos we're only going to say this once – OUR COVERDISKS HAVE NEVER HAD VIRUSES ON THEM, AND (GOD WILLING) NEVER WILL EITHER. We check the disks for all known viruses before we have them duplicated, and in the case of coverdisk eight we even included a virus detector as part of the loading sequence. If your coverdisk has a virus on it, it must have come from some other disk in your software collection. In future, we suggest you always follow the anti-infection instructions we gave you in issue six and you won't have any probs.

Dear AP,

Do any software houses take into account people who have some neurological disability? I have epilepsy and, if possible, would spend every hour of the day playing on my Amiga. Unfortunately I can't, because of my epilepsy. Many games have bright, colourful graphics (*Mega Twins, Builderland* etc) and that tends to make me have more fits (petit mals) if I play on them for long periods of time. This, after my GCSEs, will make it near impossible to start my chosen career as a game designer, as I do most of my drawings on the computer. I wrote to a few companies asking for their opinions on my problem but got no answer.

Many people in wheelchairs have only their computer to entertain them. Arcade manufacturers should take this into account and design their arcades to cope with the disabled as well. This would make many disabled people happy, as it would allow the computer freaks to sample the latest arcade for themselves instead of hearing it from their friends. That's all for now.

Yours sincerely, Nic Honey, County Durham

Great name, Nic. But more seriously, we're all a bit puzzled. If you do your designing with the computer, surely you don't have to use the colours that give you problems – you could leave that part to someone else easily enough. As for playing games, won't turning the colour off/down on your monitor help?

The arcade question is harder to answer though. I fear you're destined to continue to miss out in the forseeable future – as far as we can see, making coin-ops accessible to people in wheelchairs would make them uncomfortably low for the majority of people to use, but (more importantly) most arcades are cramped, tiny places, with as many machines crammed into as small an area as possible. There's little room to move a wheelchair down the aisles, let alone have them actually in front of the machines. If anyone's got any potential solution to the problem we'd be eager to hear it, but in the meantime you're probably just going to have to search out the biggest, friendliest arcade you can and see what they can do. Don't give up!

Dear AP,

As this is a designated forum for the voicing of opinions, I would like to comment on the following points:

1. The way females are represented as the 'weaker sex' in most computer games – eg having to be rescued by a brave, heroic male – is, in my mind, unjust. I treat people as equals, regardless of gender. Therefore I am not against the principle of rescuing females, or males. However, I am opposed to the way in which females are portrayed... if the tables were turned and the game involved rescuing a male, would he be less than half-dressed with less than half a brain cell in working order?
2. I am against creeping letters saying how wonderful your magazine is – it's fairly obvious that people wouldn't continue to spend £2.95 a month if they thought it was regurgitated cliché-ridden claptrap. These letters are not a compliment – the compliment is the fact that people buy your magazine. In reality, these letters are written solely to inflate your egos and tempt you to award them £50 worth of software. In short, people buy your magazine because they think it's wonderful... they don't need to turn to the letter page to be told that someone else thinks it's wonderful too.
3. Issue seven is the first AMIGA POWER that I've bought and I can't help feeling I've missed something... who, or indeed what, is Stuart N Hardy?

Yours expressively, Lisa Brown, East Grinstead

Firstly, Lisa, we're not entirely sure that females are represented as brainless bimbos in most Amiga games – Wolfchild *has to rescue his helpless (and possibly half-dressed) dad this ish, for instance – but if you want to prove us wrong, why not come up with a few examples?*

Secondly, I don't think we've printed a letter with no other point than to say how great we are – not since issue two, at any rate. And anyone who thinks they can simply grovel their way to the software prize is, I'm afraid, sadly mistaken. As for old Stuart, well, let's just say he's one of our more prolific correspondents...

Dear AMIGA POWER,

Far be it from me to stir up any argument in a peaceful god-fearing magazine such as this, but after no little thought it strikes me that one important issue has been, quite literally, not been taken any notice of. (*Is that the Grammar Police? Kindly arrest this man -Ed*)

More controversial than which way round the stickers should go on your disk (is the metal slidey bit the top or bottom?), the continuing question for magazines of whether the spine of the mag should be square – so as to enable printing of text, humourous statements etc – or a simple fold-over technique to stop the middle bits of pages getting lost? No doubt both have their advocates and detractors. You seem to have stayed with the square binding,

DO THE write THING

while other mags have altered almost yearly. Any thoughts? (On this, obviously. We all have thoughts.)
Yours, Matthew Wood, Croydon

Next!

Dear Sir/Madam,

I would like to complain about your review of *Captain Planet And The Planeteers* is issue eight of AMIGA POWER. In your run through of level one, you clearly stated that Wheeler (one of the Planeteers) was a 'she' when 'he' is a 'he', not a 'she', and you also called Wheeler Ma-Ti (another one of the Planeteers), and clearly stated Ma-Ti was a 'she' when 'he' is actually a 'he'. (*Good grief, who* cares*? Androgynous little twerps, the lot of 'em -Ed*)

Now I hope I made that clear enough for you, people at AMIGA POWER who's criticising words are limited to the 'ONE' word 'CRAP'. I do so hope that you can find some better (non-swear) words to criticise me.
Yours criticisingly, Keith Woodhall (age 12), Newcastle-Upon-Tyne

Don't tempt us... And if you think 'crap' is a swear word, just wait until you encounter the real world in a couple of years' time. You're not going to like it.

Dear Sir/Madam,

After a lot of brain hacking time wasted on your PD game *DAD*, I have finally done it. It took me only 69 clicks on the mouse button. At the time you had set a competition where the first correct solution would win five free games. Does this still apply after such a long time? Please write back to let me know, and if it is then I'll send you the solution to *DAD*. Hope to hear from you soon.
Yours faithfully, Michael Huntley Jnr, Gillingham

Er, how can we break this to you, Michael? You're, um, about six months late. We had DAD solutions sent in literally within hours of issue four hitting the streets. But thanks for writing anyway, and better luck next time.

Dear AMIGA POWER,

I have decided to put quill to parchment on some contentious issues.
1. ATARI vs AMIGA: Simple – STs are crap.
2. AMIGA vs CONSOLES: A little more complicated, but just as clear cut. The software available on consoles covers a very small band, ie official arcade conversions, official titles (eg *Super Mario Bros*), with little more scope than platform games or shoot-'em-ups. Originality, however, plays a key part in the majority of Amiga games (*What colour's the sky on your planet, then? -Ed*), something which is sadly missing from the console markets.
3. AMIGA POWER vs STUART N HARDY: He is obviously in need of medication and a break from reality. Perhaps now we can stop idolising him.
4. PLATFORMS vs GOOD GAMES: I hate platform games. I admit my experience of them is limited, but, in defence, I played the supposedly-good *Kid Gloves* for slightly less than it took to load (*You're obviously well-qualified to speak on the matter, then - Ed*). I also freely admit to having never played, nor owning, *Rainbow Islands*. Sorry. (*Hey, it's your loss -Ed*).
5. AMIGA POWER vs THE REST: All other mags can sit on it, because AMIGA POWER is brill. BUT, was there really any need to put a blonde haired bimbo on issue eight? Mind you... (*I wouldn't be in your shoes after we give Julie your address, pal. 'Bimbo' indeed -Ed*).
6. COVERGAMES vs ELSPA: I am one of the few who strongly support ELSPA on this subject. I witnessed in full force the decline of the 8-bit market and its mags, particularly in the form of CRASH magazine. I am eternally thankful that brilliant programmers such as Raffaele (*First Samurai*) Cecco have followed me to the Amiga.
7. GRAPHICS vs GAMEPLAY: Gameplay is obviously paramount, but I, like many, would be sorely disappointed if a game had no 'pretty' or well-executed graphics. For example, *Tetris* is superb to play, but for £25 it would still severely disappoint, and a feeling of under-using the capabilities of the Amiga would overwhelm. Ideal budget title, though, and ridiculously underpriced on Public Domain.

Merely my opinions, or speaking for a nation? YOU decide!
Yours, Jon Smith, Chorlton

You're right, Tetris *is superb to play. In our book, a good version would* easily *be worth £25 – 'using the capabilities of the Amiga' or not. That existing commercial versions maybe aren't worth that is the fault of the programmers, not the original game design. If you've got good gameplay, nothing else matters.*

Hello Sir,

I recently became the proud owner of a new Amiga 500, upgraded to one meg. I was disappointed by the speed at which it got things done, that is to say, it was a bit slow. On perusal of the manual I noticed a chip called 'Fat Agnus'. 'Aha', I thought, 'here lies the problem. Fat and fast don't mix.' In no time I had the thing apart and was in among the guts of my new machine. A quick yank with a pair of pliers and Fatty Agnus was history – I replaced her with a sleek McCain Stringfellow Oven Chip. Once all was together again, I booted up in anticipation. Nothing.

Down but not defeated I checked the manual again, and there it was – the obvious trouble. 'Gary'. He, being very close to Agnus, was obviously refusing to work without the fat one by his side. So pliers in hand again – yank – and Gary was out of there (*Reminds me of something that happened in the office a while back. But that's another story -Ed*). I replaced him with a pickled gherkin. Once again I put the thing together and booted it

£50 SOFTWARE winner

Dear Amiga Power,

I'm nearly 28. I make a living from programming computers. I like AMIGA POWER. And I haven't bought a game for a year. Why? Because my English teacher was right.

"98 percent of everything is rubbish".

My English teacher told me this when I was 15 years old (I don't think he was referring to my latest essay). It's a sweeping statement, but you can see the truth in it. Look at TV, books, magazines, films, food. You have to wade through a lot of dross before you find something really worth your time. Happily AMIGA POWER sits in the two percent. I find it witty without being juvenile and its reviews are a darn sight closer to the truth than any other magazine on the market (and I've read most of them). I don't know if you can keep it up, but I sincerely hope you can.

The EMAP magazines (notably ACE and PC Review) seem to have adopted a Sun/Daily Mirror like stance with Future. ACE is continually blowing its own trumpet and criticising certain aspects of (without naming it) AMIGA POWER's approach. PC Review is touted as being 'better than PC Format'. Well, I've a message for any ACE staffers reading this (I presume some of them do – I'm sure they wouldn't make such comments without reading the magazine). Your magazine is rubbish. Spend more time on proofreading your material and less on slagging off the (superior) competition.

ACE and PC Review, both sporting 'new styles', appear amateurish in the extreme. ACE's new big reviews are a mess. The flow of text is broken up by cutting each review in half and inserting a double page spread of poorly laid out screenshots in the middle. It's a shame because ACE used to be quite good. Finally, in common with most magazines, their reviews are far too lenient ("how many Trailblazers would you like, sir?")

But that's not why I'm writing (I just got annoyed at their repeated attacks on you). I really want to talk about games.

When AMIGA POWER came out I subscribed pretty much straight away. My Amiga Format subscription was due at around the same time so I renewed that as well. This netted me *Gods* and *Speedball 2* (two games I have thoroughly enjoyed playing). I haven't bought a game since then and hadn't for many months before. You could argue that this has left me out of touch with the games industry, but I still read the reviews and can still read between the lines and it looks as if we are no further forward.

The reason I stopped buying games was that most (98%, in fact) were rubbish. Even those that got good reviews at the time (the ones that are now scraping 50% in AP on budget re-release) were fatally flawed. The consequence is that I have a large collection of games that lie unfinished because they were unfairly difficult or just not interesting enough to justify the time it would take to complete them. I therefore have no incentive to buy new versions of the same. Why buy a new shoot-'em-up if you haven't finished the last one? You don't need three platform games you can't finish. One is more than enough.

'Well it's not our fault if you're crap at games', is a possible response from the publishers. I admit to not being the greatest games player in the world, but the sad fact is that most players are of my level (ie average). One of the greatest problems with games today is that the effort goes into designing the graphics and the sound effects, not into tuning the playability. If a game has obvious problems in it's control system (*Last Ninja 2*) or collision detection a review might pick it up. But if there are just too many things coming at you by the time you get to the fifth level and you die 99 times out of 100 the chances are a reviewer will not pick it up because he/she doesn't have the time to get that far into the game. Games design skill should not be measured by how many sprites you can stick on the screen at once, but by being able to stick just the right number on screen.

'But if they are unplayable wouldn't everyone just stop buying games?'. I imagine they would, but developers put cheat modes in the games so even if you can only get half way you have a temptingly convenient mechanism to see all the graphics they spent so much time on, at the same time killing any incentive to play the game properly any more. Now you're free to go out and buy their next release. Is this a load of hogwash? Doesn't the existence of cheat modes in games acknowledge the fact that the developers don't really expect the majority to be able to complete their games? I would love to hear a response from the developers on this.

'He's just another whinger, take no notice'. Well, I'm not alone in my views. Many of my friends are in a similar position. We are lucky enough to be able to afford decent hardware and full-price software. We don't accept pirate copies because (a) we are programmers ourselves and (b) if you haven't paid for the game you have even less incentive to persevere with it. And we're going to suggest a few pointers to help the developers prove my English teacher wrong. I would urge any AP readers (players and developers) to write in regarding these suggestions whether they agree or disagree. Only by discussing these

things will we make any progress. So here we go with the games players' charter...

Remove unnecessary delays. Spectacular intros are fine, but only if they are optional (are you listening, Psygnosis?). You should be able to skip the intro at any time with a button press. This also applies to death screens and any other between-level fillers.

Use the hardware. Surveys show that most A500 owners have at least one meg. RAM upgrades are cheap and one meg will be the standard from now on. Don't compromise by cramming things into 512K. Even if the game doesn't need the extra memory, use it to reduce disk access, or add extra sound/graphics. The same applies to extra drives. Look for second floppies and use them on two-disk games (like *Gods*). Multi-disk extravaganzas should be hard-disk installable even if you still want to retain key-disk protection.

Don't rush software out for Christmas or for bundles. *F-29 Retaliator* was the final straw for me. The radar didn't work and you usually died by other aircraft ramming you in the sky for God's sake! Magazines should come down heavily on games released with bugs in. Don't rely on the "It'll be fixed in the released version" rubbish. Review the damn released version! Poor control or collision detection usually means the game will be unplayable, don't allow it.

High score tables. They're a nice touch, but useless unless you can save them to disk (like *Blood Money*, *Gods* and most flight sims).

Difficulty. This is probably the hardest thing to get right. Don't become obsessed with how much stuff you can get on the screen. Progression is very important. The player should be able to get a little further each time he/she plays. If a game suddenly becomes too difficult you've failed. Because player skill varies you will have to compensate for this somehow. One solution is to make the game adapt 'intelligently' to the player (like *Gods*). Variable difficulty levels are an option, but include some incentive for the player to try again at a higher level if successful (eg more graphics, secret rooms, different endings etc).

Instant death. Don't put things in which kill the player for no fault of his own. There's nothing more annoying than getting a long way into a game only to be killed by some trap without warning. AMIGA POWER is to be applauded for marking down on this.

Restart points. Some of the best games are those whose very nature is non-linear, ie every time you play the game you get something different. Examples include *Speedball 2* and *Kick Off*. Games like *Elite*, *Populous* and *Lemmings* succeed partly because they let you come in where you left off. Linear games (shoot-'em-ups and platform types particularly) need saveable restart points or level codes so that the player doesn't have to wade through all the bits he has completed time and time again. *Gods* again is a good example. You don't necessarily have to save every level, perhaps a save point half way through a six level shoot-'em-up would do the trick. *Rick Dangerous* was ruined by its failings in this area.

End sequences. If a player has struggled through to the end of a game reward him/her with something worth seeing. Or weren't you expecting anyone to get there?

The courage of your convictions. Don't put cheat modes in. I know they're 'used for testing during development', but take them out. I doubt many companies will have the nerve to do this (though Dave Jones didn't put one in *Blood Money* – well done Dave, pity the game was so hard though).

Crappy demos. Most cover disk demos make me even less inclined to buy the game. This is partly due to the game being rubbish, partly to the demo being even worse. Let's see less of the *Leander*/*Video Kid* junk and more of the *Paradroid*/*Blood Money* quality of demos.

Documentation. Don't waste your time on silly novellas. Include useful playing tips. The *Powermonger* manual told you what the icons did, but not how to play the game. We don't want to have to pay extra for that, lads.

Reviews. Football referees can't change their minds, magazines can. Let's see the mags go back to games they've reviewed if they have anything new to say. Was it really that good or did you find some fatal flaw three months later? Did you find a game that you rated badly to be quite addictive and find yourself playing it six months later? Let the readers speak, they're often the best judges, especially for long-duration reviewing.

I could go on and on (some of you probably think I have already), but I know this letter's probably way too big to publish as it is. I really would like to see some reaction to what are only common-sense suggestions, particularly from the developers. I've enjoyed quite a few games in the past but they, like AP, are in the minority. I look forward to the time when even some of the better games incorporate these ideas as standard.

Thanks for an entertaining read.

Yours, Mike Welch, Basildon.

Well, there you go. Probably the most carefully thought-out letter we've ever had, and certainly the longest. We don't agree with all of it, but what do you think? Is Mike just a nihilistic old pessimist, or has he simply seen the games industry for what it really is – exactly that, an industry, committed to sales and profits, even at the expense of artistic merit?

Whatever you think, write in and tell us, especially if you're a developer or software house person. Go on, defend yourselves. We dare you!

DO THE write THING

up. Guess what? Nothing.

Now I was annoyed, very annoyed. In my anger I ate my computer, which to my surprise tasted quite nice, except for the oven chip which tasted like hardboard.

Bye Sir, Steve 'Top Floor To Rent' Bracknell, Herts

Dear AMIGA POWER,

Never have I seen so much hatred, nastiness, spite and use of the word 'crap'. No, I'm not talking about the M25 in the rush-hour, I'm talking about your letters page. Don't bother with the game reviews, flick straight to the letters page and see the likes of Stuart N Hardy, Jonathan Davies, Stuart Campbell and the Editor slug it out. Some of these guys could be the perfect opponent for Frank Bruno! Mind you, he's too nice, he'd never be able to take the heat. Witness my case:

POW! As early as issue two, Stuart Campbell is gagged by the editor because his reply to someone called the *Brat* was deemed too rude!

ZAP! Jonathan Davies is threatened with being dragged out into the street and shot because of an 80 percent review he wrote! (And Salman Rushdie thinks he's got it tough...)

WHOP! Not wanting to be left out, the Ed claims that anyone who says their letter won't be published because it contains a criticism is completely knobby!

KAPOW! Stuart Campbell is accused of being bald, a loss, a prat and on top of that, a queer!

BLAM! Stuart N Hardy gets it in the ear for writing the same letter to lots of mags. It's claimed he's not big, hard or clever!

KOWANGA! (*'Kowanga'? -Ed*) Kris King fell into the Ed's trap. After slagging off a coverdisk he made the fatal error of saying his letter would not be published. He got off lightly with 'Some games need skill...maybe you should practice a bit more'!

CRUNCH! Mark Ramshaw accused of being crap and looking like Jim Morrison (now that IS going too far)! (*Hey! Watch it! – Mark*)

WALLOP! Stuart Campbell gets it again: 'Just how crap is this man?'

BOWONGO! (*You're just being silly now -Ed*) Stuart N Hardy again! 'Intensely dull' and a bit of a yawn!

The list goes on, not to mention the things people say about games (poor old *Kick Off 2*). In fact, the good-natured (?) loathing that exudes from each issue has made me a bit nervous about sending this letter to you. What kind of abuse am I letting myself in for? But never fear, I can take it (I think).

Keep up the good work with your razor-like replies.

Yours, Andrew Corris, West Wickham

PS I bet you don't print this letter!!!

Okay then, we won't! (Pause.) Er...

That's about the lot for this month, except for the subject which has taken up about half of our mailbag this month – the A500 Plus and it's near-legendary incompatibility problems. Firstly, we'd like to take this opportunity to say that yes, all of our coverdisks from now on will be fully A500P compatible.

Secondly, for all of you out there stuck with Pluses and collections of useless software, it looks like there may be a solution at hand. If you phone a company called Phoenix on 0532 311932 they'll tell you about a nifty device called a ROM sharer. It allows you to install the new Kickstart 2.0 ROM while still keeping your old Kickstart 1.3 ROM in the machine at the same time, which should theoretically solve the vast majority of incompatibility probs. It's not too expensive, so why not give them a call? We don't know how well it works because we've not tried it yet, but it's worth a shot. You've everything to gain... Bye. ●

AND ANOTHER THING...

• John Hinton of Hassocks wants to see a new rating system whereby we mark games according to their perceived 'moepp', or 'minutes of entertainment per pound'. With this system, a game costing £10 which we thought would give you, say, 20 hours of genuine entertainment would score 120 moepp (1200 minutes divided by 10 pounds). Nice idea, John, but game marking is hard enough already without us having to be clairvoyant into the bargain...

• Brent Cartwright of Normanton wants to know why we're printing letters on the side of the mag. If you haven't worked it out by now, Brent...

• GD Smith of Bromsgrove wants to see features about 'hardware and wordprocessing software and other items that are not games'. We're a GAMES mag for goodness sake, if you want serious stuff get Amiga Shopper or Amiga Format. Sorry, but that's the way it is and that's the way it's going to stay, GD.

• Steven Alderson of Middlesborough wants, for some inexplicable reason, to know what kind of music Stuart likes. Stuart says 'intergalactic punk rock hip-hop', which frankly is just the kind of unhelpful nonsense that we have to put up with all the time...

• Brian Jones (!) of Bridgwater thinks the letters column is dull and tedious and we should get rid of it. Well, Brian, it's all up to you really. *We* don't write the letters page you know...

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PUBLIC DOMAIN

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AFRIKA KORPS
Impressions £29.99

Uppers – Intelligent opponents set it apart from the standard wargame. ***Downers*** – But not enough to give it any flair. ***The Bottom Line*** – Just because it's a wargame, it doesn't mean it has to be this primitive. ★

AH37-M THUNDERHAWK
Core £30.99

Uppers – The fastest, slickest 3D graphics yet to grace the Amiga. The arcade approach makes things much easier to get to grips with. ***Downers*** – The lack of real sim elements may put some off, and the mouse control is a bit unwieldy. ***The Bottom Line*** – A brilliantly executed arcade-simulation crossover, which captures the frenetic helicopter feel quite excellently. ★★★★★

ALIEN BREED
Team 17 £25.99

Uppers – Fast-moving and atmospheric *Gauntlet* variant, with lots of lovely touches, a two player mode, and a free *Pong* game! ***Downers*** – Only six levels, and it's not the kind of game you're likely to come back to when you've finished it. ***The Bottom Line*** – Not a bad effort at all from the ex-PD boys, but maybe a little thin to last for long. ★★★★

ALIEN STORM
US Gold £25.99

Uppers – *Golden Axe* given a futuristic sci-fi scenario. ***Downers*** – The elements of playability which made *Golden Axe* so great are missing from this one. ***The Bottom Line*** – Technically adept, but sorely lacking in every other respect ★★

ALPHA WAVES
Infogrames £25.99

Uppers – Nice 3D bouncing romp. Bizarre, but endearing (in a French sort of way). ***Downers*** – It tends to feel like an executive toy, and a very expensive one at that. ***The Bottom Line*** – A novel diversion but no great shakes. ★★

ALTERED DESTINY
Accolade £29.99

Uppers – An absorbing adventure in true American style. ***Downers*** – It's not really anything new, and it sure isn't up to Lucasfilm standards. ***The Bottom Line*** – You could do worse, but you could certainly do better. ★★★

AMIGA ENCOUNTER
Novagen £20.42

Uppers – Very fast and atmospheric. ***Downers*** – It's just *Battlezone* yet again. ***The Bottom Line*** – Good old-fashioned zooming 'n' blasting fun, but it really should have been a budget game. ★★★

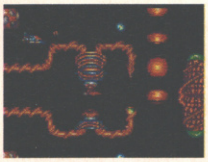
AMNIOS
Psygnosis £25.99

Uppers – Another old Williams arcade classic gets dusted down and re-interpreted (this time it's *Sinistar*). ***Downers*** – It's already been done better (if not as lavishly) by the under-rated *Photon Storm*. ***The Bottom Line*** – Good for an occasional blast. ★★★

ARMOUR-GEDDON
Psygnosis £25.99

Uppers – Lots of tanks, lots of planes, lots of places to go. It's deep and wide and tall. ***Downers*** – Takes a lot of self-discipline to play properly. ***The Bottom Line*** – A natural successor to *Carrier Command*. ★★★★

ARMALYTE
Thalamus £25.99



Uppers – Enjoyable in an old-fashioned sort of way. ***Downers*** – Sloppily presentation and inadequate design. ***The Bottom Line*** – Totally eclipsed by Activision's *R-Type II*. ★★

ARNHEM
CCS £19.95

Uppers – A 8-bit classic wargame finally brought to Amiga owners. ***Downers*** – ...but nobody really wanted it anyway. ***The Bottom Line*** – Primitive beyond belief – even wargamers should give it a wide berth. ★

A-10 TANK KILLER
Dynamix (Sierra) £35.75

Uppers – A wealth of typical flight sim-style detail. ***Downers*** – Gameplay suffers due to the sluggish frame rate and lack of a real flying 'feel'. ***The Bottom Line*** – A interesting but flawed attempt at taking the flight simulation genre a stage further. ★★★

ATOMINO
Psygnosis £25.99

Uppers – Easy to pick up, with thousands of levels to keep you going. ***Downers*** – Can covalent bonding be fun? We're not sure. Rather samey; very tough; crap music. ***The Bottom Line*** – Slightly similar to *Pipe Mania* in some ways – if you liked that, then try this one for size. ★★★

BACK TO THE FUTURE PART III
Image Works £24.99

Uppers – Variety, neat animation, some decent jokes. ***Downers*** – But film licences nearly always feel too thin to be worth 25 quid... ***The Bottom Line*** – ...and this one's no different. Fun but slight.★★★

BABY JO
Loriciels £24.99

Uppers – Sweet *Mario*-influenced game with barrels of cuteness and lots of simple fun. ***Downers*** – Death by full nappy – yeuch! ***The Bottom Line*** – Lovable and entertaining, if technically a bit on the crap side. Overpriced for what it is, though. ★★

BADLANDS
Tengen (Domark) £19.99

Uppers – A close conversion... ***Downers*** – ...of a crap overhead-view arcade race game. ***The Bottom Line*** – So workmanlike its jeans hang over its arse. ★★

THE BALL GAME
Electronic Zoo £25.99

Uppers – Based on the excellent but un-released *Infection* puzzle game. ***Downers*** – The concept is spoiled by senseless changes to the rules. ***The Bottom Line*** – Interesting, but ineptly executed. ★★

BARBARIAN 2
Psygnosis £25.99

Uppers – It looks good and there's a generous measure of senseless brutality and fantasy atmosphere ***Downers*** – Very repetitive and very shallow in the gameplay stakes. ***The Bottom Line*** – *Shadow Of The Beast* fans will love it. ★★★

BATTLE CHESS II – CHINESE CHESS
Electronic Arts £25.99

Uppers – Cute graphics, and a new angle on the chess theme. ***Downers*** – The animations soon become tiresome, and Chinese chess isn't half as interesting as the standard game anyway. ***The Bottom Line*** – Good as a showpiece game, but a failure as a piece of playable software. ★★

BATTLE COMMAND
Ocean £24.99

Uppers – Loads of missions, atmospheric solid 3D graphics (ie lots of green), plus a good mix of strategy and blasting. ***Downers*** – Takes a while to get into; some odd (and impossible to complete) missions. ***The Bottom Line*** – If you've got the self-discipline to persevere past an uninspiring start, this is a worthy follow-up to the classic *Carrier Command*. ★★★

BATTLE ISLE
Ubi Soft £29.99

Uppers – Easy to get to grips with. Looks lovely, and the intro sequence is even funny. ***Downers*** – Disk access at every turn and combat which seems to be random are a pain. ***The Bottom Line*** – An enormously promising and brave idea which hasn't quite come off successfully. ★★★★

BEAST BUSTERS
Activision £25.99

Uppers – Graphically close to the original arcade version. ***Downers*** – Tends to slow down when there's a lot happening on screen, and it's far too easy. ***The Bottom Line*** – Doesn't really compare too well with all the other *Op Wolf* games on the Amiga. ★★

BIG BUSINESS
Magic Bytes £25.99

Uppers – Well-programmed and a fairly original concept. Would you believe, a 'humorous business simulation'? ***Downers*** – It's true, though the humour is feeble-witted stereotyping, and the business part is tedious number-crunching. ***The Bottom Line*** – Some nice touches, but at the end of the day it just isn't any fun to play at all. ★★

BILL & TED'S EXCELLENT ADVENTURE
Capstone (Accolade) £24.99

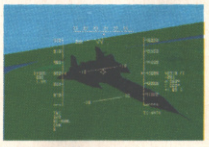
Uppers – In our humble opinion, a most excellent subject for a licence. The game even manages to capture some of the flavour of the bodacious film too. ***Downers*** – But that

doesn't stop it being a strong contender for the 'Weakest Gameplay In The World' award. ***The Bottom Line*** – Something of a missed opportunity. Let's hope for better things from the game of the film sequel. ★★

BILLIARDS II SIMULATOR
Infogrames £25.99

Uppers – Plenty of variations, including a 'crazy pool' with an octagonal table. ***Downers*** – Neither the 2D or 3D modes allow a decent shot to be made, and the 'feel' of the sport is lost completely. ***The Bottom Line*** – Another game which crumbles in the face of its competition, this time in the form of *Jimmy White's Whirlwind Snooker*. ★★

BIRDS OF PREY
Electronic Arts £34.99



Uppers – Phenomenally comprehensive. A wider choice of aircraft than every flight sim ever put together. ***Downers*** – The screen update is excruciatingly jerky. The controls are as unrealistic as ever. ***The Bottom Line*** – The most complex flight sim to date. Virtually guaranteed to hold your attention for months. ★★★★

BLADE WARRIOR
Image Works £25.99

Uppers – Pretty breathtaking graphics, with plenty of action and puzzling too. ***Downers*** – The gameplay is unlikely to be to everyone's taste. ***The Bottom Line*** – Possibly the most atmospheric game ever. ★★★★

BLUE MAX
Mindscape £34.99

Uppers – Less techie than most flying thangs. Some rather spiffing sound compliments the WWI feel

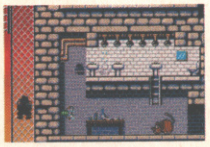
Yes, it's that Bottom Line time of the mag again, time to lose yourself in eight pages of mini-reviews (not unlike the Bottom Line boxes in the big reviews, in fact, synchronicity fans) giving you ratings to all the major full price Amiga games released over the last year or so. You'll notice we've gone up a page again this month – just to fit everything in – but it stops here for the time being (fabby though TBL is, we don't want it taking over the mag). This month's new entries include *Smash TV, Birds Of Prey, Battle Isle, Celtic Legends, Realms, Barbarian II, Knightmare* and more – you need never buy a characterless, boring, unplayable or just plain crap game again...

THE BOTTOM LINE

RATINGS: ★★★★★ Excellent ★★★★★ Nearly there ★★★★ Very good ★★★ Has its moments ★★ Flawed ★ Dire

nicely. ***Downers*** – Not a winner in the user-friendliness stakes, and the slow and sloppy main game never (ahem) really takes off. ***The Bottom Line*** – Dull. *Not* the definitive bi-plane game for Biggles buffs it should have been. ★

THE BLUES BROTHERS
Titus £25.99

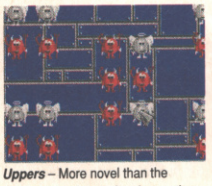


Uppers – So playable its frightening. And it's funny too. ***Downers*** – The two player mode is a wasted opportunity. ***The Bottom Line*** – Probably the best character licence ever to appear on the Amiga. ★★★★

BONANZA BROS
US Gold £25.99

Uppers – An original(ish) theme complemented by a unique and enteresting visual approach. ***Downers*** – What's there is a right laugh, but only for a limited 10 scenarios ***The Bottom Line*** – Stylish, but lacking longivity.★★★★

BOOLY
Loriciels £19.99



Uppers – More novel than the average puzzler, and an interesting blend of logic, tactics and luck. ***Downers*** – Possibly requires too much self-discipline to play properly for most people. ***The Bottom Line*** – Fascinating and moderately entertaining, but it's always going to be a minority-appeal kind of thing. ★★★

BOSTON BOMB CLUB
Silmarils £25.99

Uppers – A neat twist on the sliding block type of puzzle game. ***Downers*** – It hasn't got the longest game life ever, and the basic concept won't exactly light everybody's fire. ***The Bottom Line*** – One of the better puzzlers we've seen lately. Pleasing, fun and very French. ★★★★

BOTICS
Krisalis £19.99

Uppers – Nice sound; futuristic graphics. ***Downers*** – Absolutely dire *Pong*-style gameplay. ***The Bottom Line*** – Get out of here! ★

BRAIN BLASTERS
Ubi Soft £25.99

Uppers – Well, there's a simultaneous two player mode. ***Downers*** – But it's only really remotely playable when played solo. ***The Bottom Line*** – A sad, simplistic and ineffective puzzler. ★

BRAT
Image Works £24.99

Uppers – Very pretty, very smooth, very challenging. ***Downers*** – ...and very, very irritating indeed, especially if you hate the central character. ***The Bottom Line*** – Okay if you play it with the sound off. ★★★

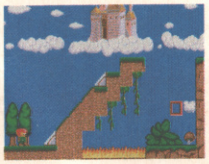
BREACH 2
Impressions £24.99

Uppers – Stick with it and you'll find an immensely rewarding space/strategy blast with loads of levels. ***Downers*** – Scrappy graphics and some awkward quirks will deter many. ***The Bottom Line*** – Loved *Laser Squad*? Then you'll probably take a shine to *Breach 2*. ★★

BRIGADE COMMANDER
Electronic Zoo £25.99

Uppers – Desert Storm scenarios give it a nice touch of topicality. ***Downers*** – The usual crap graphics. ***The Bottom Line*** – Friendlier than the average wargame, and more playable too. ★

BUILDERLAND
Loriciels £24.99



Uppers – Interesting and cute *Lemmings* derivative. ***Downers*** – It's written in AMOS, and it shows. ***The Bottom Line*** – Good fun, but it's a shame they couldn't have hired someone to program it properly. ★★

CADAVER
Image Works £24.99

Uppers – Gorgeously atmospheric graphics; a good mix of puzzling and hacking. ***Downers*** – One or two irritating moments and it's all a bit lacking in the excitement department. ***The Bottom Line*** – A nice blend of 3D graphics and adventuring (but it's not a classic). ★★★

CADAVER – THE PAYOFF
Renegade £16.99

Uppers – A wonderful add-on for fans of the first *Cadaver*. ***Downers*** – Not a lot of use for anyone else though. ***The Bottom Line*** – If you've got the original, this isn't such a bad price to pay for more of the same. ★★★

CAPTAIN PLANET
Mindscape £25.99

Uppers – Um, it's ideologically sound. And the colours are nice. ***Downers*** – Terminally flawed gameplay, and seems to have been put together in a terrible hurry. ***The Bottom Line*** – No fun to play at all, and that's all that matters in the end. Forget it. ★★

THE CARDINAL OF THE KREMLIN
Accolade £24.99

Uppers – Reasonably captivating and accessible strategy. ***Downers*** – Ridiculous arcade sequence dropped slap bang in the middle of the game almost totally destroys the atmosphere. ***The Bottom Line*** – Alarmingly stupid design blows what could have been a winner. ★★

CARDIAXX
Electronic Zoo £25.99

Uppers – A shoot-'em-up with the added ingredients of (a lorra, lorra) speed and a score bar right in the middle of the play area. ***Downers*** – Beyond these 'features' there's not really anything special about *Cardiaxx* at all. ***The Bottom Line*** – Its heart's in the right place, but its playability hasn't turned up to the party. ★★

CARTHAGE
Psygnosis £24.99

Uppers – Excellent graphics and some nifty arcade sequences from the masters of slick programming. ***Downers*** – But underneath it's a distinctly average strategy game. ***The Bottom Line*** – Despite appearances, not one for the joystick junkies out there. ★★★

CELTIC LEGENDS
Ubi Soft £30.99

Uppers – Plenty of strategy plus plenty of action plus good presentation make for a more than passable role-playing challenge. ***Downers*** – The ponderous computer opponent won't break any speed records. ***The Bottom Line*** – More than enough brainstorming and hack'n'slay to keep you in jollies for ages. ★★★★★

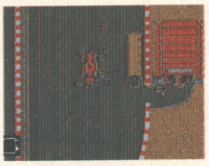
CENTURION
Electronic Arts £24.99

Uppers – Fairly interesting management sections with some nifty battle sequences. ***Downers*** – Two appalling arcade sections blow its chances. ***The Bottom Line*** – Unbalanced. ★★

CHALLENGE GOLF
On-Line £24.99

Uppers – Easy to get into, and up to four players catered for. ***Downers*** – Mind-numbingly unrealistic putting sequence, and loads of unnecessary little bugs. ***The Bottom Line*** – Lack of playability makes this a seriously below-par golf sim. Go for *PGA Tour Golf* instead. ★

CHAMPION DRIVER
Idea £25.99



Uppers – An overhead racing game which knows its limitations, and works splendidly within them. ***Downers*** – Less frills than a frill-less thing, and isn't this a high price for this sort of thing? ***The Bottom Line*** – Very fast and slick racer, which lacks longivity. ★★★

CHAMPION OF THE RAJ
Image Works £25.99

Uppers – Arcade sequences break up the heavy-duty strategy action. ***Downers*** – Even more ridiculous disk accessing than usual in this type of thing. Crap programming generally. ***The Bottom Line*** – Potentially good game ruined by complete lack of playability. ★

CHAOS IN ANDROMEDA
On-Line £24.99

Uppers – Lots of character interaction and plenty to do. ***Downers*** – Crap fight sequences and tiny graphics. ***The Bottom Line*** – Enjoyable *Ultima*-style adventure slightly spoiled by sloppy programming. Still good fun though. ★★★

CHAOS STRIKES BACK
FTL (Mirrorsoft) £24.99

Uppers – Complex and ingenious puzzles; very user friendly; great sound. ***Downers*** – Slightly old fashioned looking. ***The Bottom Line*** – Engrossing role playing adventure using the *Dungeon Master* game system. ★★★★

THE CHARGE OF THE LIGHT BRIGADE
Impressions £29.99

Uppers – Visually impressive wargame, with instant appeal and plenty of user-friendly presentation. ***Downers*** – Things fall down in the wargaming aspect of things, with some rather silly rules. ***The Bottom Line*** – A very brave try, but it doesn't quite reach the heights to which it aspires. ★★★

CHUCK ROCK
Core Design £24.99

Uppers – A first class caveman romp, with some innovation in the gameplay for once. ***Downers*** – A touch shallow and a touch easy. ***The Bottom Line*** – Pretty brilliant platformer, one of the Amiga's very best. ★★★★

CHUCK YEAGER'S ADVANCED FLIGHT TRAINER 2.0
Electronic Arts £24.99

Uppers – A veritable air force of planes to fly, with piles of options, missions and the obligatory load of external views. There's even the opportunity to fly the Space Shuttle. ***Downers*** – A complete lack of speed, bad disk access and naff perspective puts a damper on the whole affair. ***The Bottom Line*** – Low flying flight sim – fails to stay with the competition. ★★★

CHIP'S CHALLENGE
US Gold £24.99

Uppers – Lots and lots of levels; typically well thought out console-style gameplay. ***Downers*** – Simplistic graphics; lack of depth. ***The Bottom Line*** – Good, but not the most characterful of puzzle games, and not the cheapest either. ★★★

COHORT
Impressions £29.99

Uppers – (Relatively) excellent graphics and helpful user-interface make things accessible. ***Downers*** – The control system isn't as good as it should be. ***The Bottom Line*** – A fine off-beat wargame, but overpriced. ★★

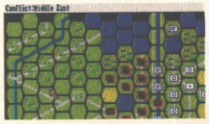
THE COLONEL'S BEQUEST
Sierra £34.99

Uppers – Mildly intriguing whodunit, with that familiar Sierra style of presentation. ***Downers*** – Terrible graphics, hours of tedium. ***The Bottom Line*** – Overpriced and over here. Sierra can do much better than this.★★

COMMANDO
Elite £19.99

Uppers – Lovingly recreated coin-op blast-'em scroller. The game that launched a thousand scrolling war blasters. ***Downers*** – As fashionable as an anorak. ***The Bottom Line*** – Classic stuff, but not a good indication of the Amiga's capabilities. ★★★

CONFLICT MIDDLE EAST
SSI/US Gold £30.99



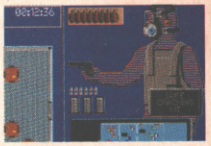
Uppers – A wargame in the traditional sense, but executed very well indeed. ***Downers*** – The wargame label is no longer a valid excuse for a program looking so dated. ***The Bottom Line*** – Of limited interest, even to hardened wargamers. ★★★

COUGAR FORCE
Tomahawk £19.99

Uppers – The box is quite interesting (actually that's a bit of a lie). ***Downers*** – Everything. The sound, the graphics, the gameplay – all dire in the extreme. ***The Bottom Line*** – A perfect present for pyromaniacs. ★

COVERT ACTION
MicroProse £34.99

Uppers – Lots of atmosphere and some excellent sub-games. ***Downers*** – Could have been better programmed, could have had much better controls, and could have beem £10 cheaper. ***The Bottom Line*** – Surprisingly playable and enjoyable – with just a little more user-friendliness this would have been an absolute classic. ★★★



CRIME DOES NOT PAY
Titus £25.95

Uppers – Er... reasonable(ish) graphics? ***Downers*** – Terrible gameplay, pathetic humour, atrocious design, useless plot... shall we go on? I think not. ***The Bottom Line*** – Crime doesn't pay. This game is a software crime, so work it out for yourself. ★

CRIME TIME
Starbyte £25.99

Uppers – A German adventure with the added bonus of... graphics! ***Downers*** – But not very good ones, and the rest of the game is a little on the trashy side. ***The Bottom Line*** – A hideously dated, unoriginal adventure. ★

CRIME WAVE
US Gold £24.95

Uppers – Gore galore; the numerous video interludes spice it up a bit. ***Downers*** – The actual game is dull in the extreme, and the waiting between levels is monstrous. ***The Bottom Line*** – A bog-standard blast-'em-up with knobs on. ★

CRUISE FOR A CORPSE
Delphine/US Gold £27.99

Uppers – Superbly-designed plot, lovely graphics, and the usual compulsive quality you expect from Delphine. ***Downers*** – Loads (and loads) of disk-accessing, and even when you've got the solution it seemingly takes eight hours to play it through to the end. ***The Bottom Line*** – Not flawless, but still an absolutely lovely game, and a worthy companion to *Monkey Island*. ★★★★★

CYBERCON III
US Gold £24.99

Uppers – Brilliant sense of 'being there', and better Freescape than

Freescape. ***Downers*** – Predictably, not all that accessible to your average game player. ***The Bottom Line*** – Well worth the effort of getting into. ★★★★★

DARKMAN
Ocean £25.99

Uppers – The driving section is imaginative and fun. ***Downers*** – Everything else is hackneyed, licence-by-numbers rubbish. ***The Bottom Line*** – Not quite as bad as *Total Recall* and *Nightbreed*, but not very much better either. The worst film game for quite some time. ★★

DAS BOOT
Mindscape £29.99

Uppers – The most accessible sub sim to date. ***Downers*** – ...but that still doesn't make it particularly accessible. ***The Bottom Line*** – Playable, but overpriced. The best in its field. ★★★

DEATHBRINGER
Empire £25.99

Uppers – Stunning parallax scrolling, plenty of tongue-in-cheek action and a wonderfully camp hero. ***Downers*** – Shallow hack'n'slash gameplay and dodgy collision detection. ***The Bottom Line*** – Not a lot of entertainment for a full-price game. ★★★

DEATH KNIGHTS OF KRYNN
SSI / US Gold £25.99

Uppers – A great improvement on the previous 'Krynn' role-players. ***Downers*** – But compared to the mighty *Eye Of The Beholder*, this is very average indeed. ***The Bottom Line*** – A nice enough product, but nothing very spectacular. ★★★

DEUTEROS
Activision £25.99

Uppers – An incredibly huge and absorbing game, with challenges that seem perfectly paced to be in tune with the developing game-skills of the average player. ***Downers*** – Visually it can be a bit of a yawn. ***The Bottom Line*** – Don't be fooled by the strategy exterior – this is a game that everyone should try. ★★★★★

DINO WARS
Magic Bytes £25.99

Uppers – A novel chess variant, including a great 'two players at once' option where you don't have to wait for the other player to move. ***Downers*** – The central beat-'em-up section is a bit crap, and the game as a whole is over-simplistic. ***The Bottom Line*** – A nice idea, but asking £25 for it is a bit of a cheek – there just isn't enough to it. ★★

DISC
Loriciel £24.99

Uppers – A few nice graphical touches. ***Downers*** – Appallingly-designed gameplay with very little actual action. ***The Bottom Line*** – A crappy *Discs Of Tron* rip-off without most of the original's good features. ★

DISCOVERY
Micro Illusions £25.99

Uppers – Good graphics for an educational game. ***Downers*** – For a game which relies heavily on speech synthesis, the speech quality is terrible. ***The Bottom Line*** – Tricky to play and educationally dubious, this is a bit of a flop. ★★

DOUBLE DRAGON III
Storm £25.99

Uppers – Give us a minute, we'll think of something. ***Downers*** – A very bad example of a very tired genre. ***The Bottom Line*** – The beat-'em-up done just how it shouldn't be.★

DRAGON FIGHTER
Idea £25.99

Uppers – An unusual mixture of scrolling shoot-'em-up and strategy-ish bits. ***Downers*** – The strategy bits just get in the way, and the arcade bit hasn't been done justice. ***The Bottom Line*** – Slick, but insubstantial. ★★

DRAGONS OF FLAME
SSI (US Gold) £24.99

Uppers – Almost instant playability – not something you'd expect from a role playing game. ***Downers*** – A bit simplistic for all the real Dungeons & Dragons fans. ***The Bottom Line*** – An excellent introduction to the new bread of fantasy RPGs. ★★★

DRAGON'S LAIR II
Readysoft £44.95

Uppers – Really incredibly gorgeous cartoon graphics. ***Downers*** – Minimal player interaction and a ridiculous price tag. ***The Bottom Line*** – Not the best value game in the world. ★★

ECO PHANTOMS
Electronic Zoo £25.99

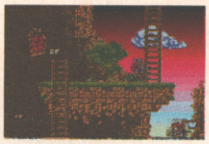
Uppers – A nice line in H.G.Wells sci-fi theatrics and some unusual sub-sections give *Eco Phantoms* a highly original flavour. ***Downers*** – The parts don't actually add up to very much, and the copy protection system could induce bouts of violence. ***The Bottom Line*** – A reasonable 3D routine masquerading as a game. ★

EDD THE DUCK
Impulze £24.99

Uppers – *Rainbow Islands*-inspired gameplay ensures some level of interest. ***Downers*** – But the whole thing just doesn't inspire, and the difficulty is placed too high for a young audience. ***The Bottom Line*** – Your granny might buy you one. ★★

ELF
Ocean £25.39

Uppers – An excellent arcade adventure romp, with enough



interesting little extras to make it fresh. ***Downers*** – These things are getting just a little bit old-fashioned, aren't they? ***The Bottom Line*** – A good solid game from the Ocean stable, but not a world beater. ★★★★

ELVIRA – MISTRESS OF THE DARK
Accolade £24.99

Uppers – Elvira's gorgeous; the graphics really draw the player in. ***Downers*** – Pity the game itself is nigh on impossible – and it takes five disks! ***The Bottom Line*** – Falls apart due to disk swapping and infuriating gameplay. A real pity. ★★

EMLYN HUGHES' ARCADE QUIZ
Audiogenic £24.99

Uppers – Just like a pub quiz machine... ***Downers*** – ...but with Emlyn Hughes in it (and no real cash prizes). ***The Bottom Line*** – Oh dear. ★

E-SWAT
US Gold £24.99

Uppers – As conversions go, it's not a complete nightmare... ***Downers*** – ...but let's be honest, the arcade original was duff, duff, duff. ***The Bottom Line*** – A reasonable conversion of a terminally average game. Don't bother ★

EUROPEAN SUPERLEAGUE
CDS £24.99

Uppers – A surprisingly involving footy strategy thing in the *Football Manager* vein. ***Downers*** – They're not still making these things are they? ***The Bottom Line*** – A dated idea – it sounds tedious but it's actually executed quite commendably. ★★

EXILE
Audiogenic £24.99

Uppers – Real-world physics incorporated into an arcade game; it's more of a true arcade adventure than most games bearing that tag. ***Downers*** – Rather primitive graphics, and not the most instantly playable game ever. ***The Bottom Line*** – A great arcade adventure, but it might not be your cup of tea if you're an action fan. Voted AMIGA POWER reviewers game of the year! ★★★★★

EXTERMINATOR
Audiogenic £24.99

Uppers – Very original (read 'very, very odd indeed') arcade thing, well converted to retain the original's feel. ***Downers*** – Confusing initially, but once you've played it for a while it's...confusing. ***The Bottom Line*** – Great fun, but it doesn't really make it in the longevity stakes. ★★★

THE EXECUTIONER
Hawk £25.99

Uppers – A playable enough *Thrust*-variant, with one or two extra bits tacked on (such as the tasteful

torture scenes). ***Downers*** – The core of the game just isn't exciting or different enough to give *The Executioner* that 'one more go' appeal. ***The Bottom Line*** – Fine if you don't mind the slightly repetitive gameplay, and significant lack of action. ★★

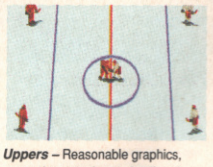
EYE OF THE BEHOLDER
SSI (US Gold) £29.99

Uppers – Takes *Dungeon Master* a step further. Excellent atmosphere and graphics. ***Downers*** – Despite being better than *DM*, it's not as different as it should have been. There's still room for improvement in the D&D genre. ***The Bottom Line*** – Quite possibly the best D&D game yet for the Amiga. (Or, indeed, for anything else). ★★★★★

F-15 STRIKE EAGLE II
MicroProse £34.99

Uppers – Graphics to make you gasp, sound effects to get your adrenalin pumping and gameplay to leave you in a quivering heap on the floor. ***Downers*** – Despite the shoot-'em-up nature of things, it can all be a touch too much for the less ambitious games player. ***The Bottom Line*** – Quite possibly the last word in flight sims (so far, anyway). ★★★★★

FACE OFF
£25.99



Uppers – Reasonable graphics, some nice attention to detail and fairly realistic player movement. ***Downers*** – Not the game to show just how good ice hockey can be on the Amiga. ***The Bottom Line*** – A very average game, but we've yet to see any other better ice hockey efforts. ★★

FATE – GATES OF DAWN
Rainbow Arts £29.99

Uppers – 'Unbelievably horny women', unusual presentation and more to do than some so-called RPG games. ***Downers*** – Fiddly control and tatty presentation. ***The Bottom Line*** – Just another FRPG really, but with enough character to make it

worthwhile. Far from essential though. ★★★

FIGHTING SOCCER
Activision £24.99

Uppers – The coin-op was mildly amusing(ish). ***Downers*** – You are accused of producing an utterly dull game of the lowest calibre. How do you plead? ***The Bottom Line*** – Guilty as hell. ★

FINAL BLOW
Storm £25.99

Uppers – A pretty close conversion of the coin-op. ***Downers*** – Which was an absolute duffer in the first place. ***The Bottom Line*** – Not the best boxing game around (and just look at the competition!). ★

FINAL FIGHT
US Gold £25.99

Uppers – Context-sensitive controls, huge sprites, arcade-true graphics, generally an excellent conversion. ***Downers*** – Then again it's a conversion of a fairly dull, and quite dated, formulaic coin-op. And the beat-'em-up is looking a little long in the tooth these days. ***The Bottom Line*** – Technically impressive and loads of fun to play, this might even knock the famous *IK+* off its 'best Amiga beat-'em-up' perch. (But then again it might not). ★★★★

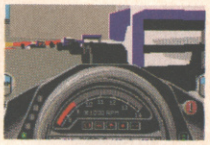
FIRST SAMURAI
Image Works £25.99

Uppers – Stunningly well-programmed, imaginative design and inspired use of sound, all added to a classic and proven gameplay style. ***Downers*** – Maybe just a little on the slow side. ***The Bottom Line*** – Simply gorgeous arcade adventure that you really shouldn't be without. ★★★★★

FOOTBALL DIRECTOR II
D&H £24.99

Uppers – Reasonably complex and wide-ranging strategy bash. ***Downers*** – £25 for a footie management game? Get real. ***The Bottom Line*** – Adds nothing new to the decades-old number-crunching of every other football manager game ever. ★★

FORMULA ONE GRAND PRIX
MicroProse £34.99



Uppers – Breathtakingly detailed 3D and the finest driving feel yet seen on the Amiga. ***Downers*** – The prospect of such an accurate Grand Prix simulation isn't going to appeal to everyone. ***The Bottom Line*** – The best racing game we've ever seen, and probably the best game to appear on the Amiga. ★★★★★

4D SPORTS BOXING
Mindscape £25.99

Uppers – The best boxing game yet, with some highly original polygon graphics. ***Downers*** – Slower than you could possibly imagine, with an over-complex control system. ***The Bottom Line*** – Unusual, but not actually very playable. ★★

FLAMES OF FREEDOM – MIDWINTER II
MicroProse £34.99

Uppers – There's loads to do, and the whole thing looks lovely. Hours of fun to be had from the character-designing section alone. ***Downers*** – Lots of stupid holes in the logic, and an uncomfortable balance between the strategy and action aspects. ***The Bottom Line*** – Works better in theory than in practice. *Midwinter* fans will love it, but the rest of us are likely to get very bored very quickly. ★★★★

FLIGHT OF THE INTRUDER
Image Works £30.99

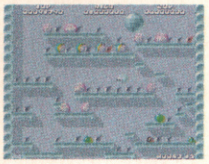
Uppers – Highly realistic and flexible (you can make it almost as simple as you want), and decent graphics too. ***Downers*** – It's not immediately attractive by any means, and the controls are even more forbidding than usual. Bugged, too. ***The Bottom Line*** – Not technically amazing, but absorbing and entertaining, with a neat two-player link-up game. ★★★★

FRENETIC
Core Design £20.99

Uppers – Fast and good-looking. ***Downers*** – You've seen this all before, and done rather more excitingly into the bargain.

The Bottom Line – Slick programming only serves to make *Frenetic* tedious in a professional kind of a way. ★★

FUZZBALL
System 3 £19.99



Uppers – Big, squishy and lovable – *Fuzzball* begs to be played. Platform and puzzling styles make an intriguing cocktail. ***Downers*** – If only it was easier. Less viciousness would make all the difference. ***The Bottom Line*** – Good, but some irritating quirks of game design means it falls well short of classic status. ★★★★

GALAXY FORCE II
Activision £24.99

Uppers – An ambitious attempt at a visually stunning coin-op. ***Downers*** – Everything else. ***The Bottom Line*** – If you know you can't do it why bother trying? ★

GARFIELD – THE WINTER'S TAIL
The Edge £24.99

Uppers – Brilliant Jim Davis graphics. ***Downers*** – Crappy Steve Davis gameplay. ***The Bottom Line*** – What a wasted licence. For die-hard fans only. ★

GAUNTLET III
US Gold £25.99

Uppers – A new angle on the arcade classic gives some novelty value, and makes proceedings sufficiently different this time around. ***Downers*** – The pace is ponderous, there aren't enough baddies, and the speech is badly missed. ***The Bottom Line*** – Fine, but it doesn't really live up to the legend that is *Gauntlet*. Give us a bash on *Gauntlet 2*, anyday. ★★★

GAZZA II
Empire £24.99

Uppers – Gazza doesn't actually appear in the game much. ***Downers*** – Juddering sprites, poor control (just like the man himself), terrible sound – take your pick. ***The Bottom Line*** – It's enough to reduce you to tears. ★

GEISHA
Tomahawk £25.99

Uppers – Um, well, you *do* get to see some girls' bits. (Sorry, female readers). ***Downers*** – Tacky and fatuous 'plot', giving way to some of the most unplayable sub-games ever, with presentation of a kind that people used to get arrested for. A nightmare all round really. ***The Bottom Line*** – Could this perhaps be the worst full-price game ever reviewed in AMIGA POWER? A five percent mark would seem to suggest so... ★

GEM'X
Demonware £24.99

Uppers – Gorgeous graphics, exquisite sound, beautifully simple mental torture. ***Downers*** – Won't change your mind if you're not into puzzlers. ***The Bottom Line*** – One of the best puzzle games to date. ★★★★

GERM CRAZY
Electronic Zoo £25.99

Uppers – Not quite as expensive as Mindscape's *Life & Death*. ***Downers*** – But with little else in its favour. ***The Bottom Line*** – Another half-baked idea, not followed through properly. (Where do they all come from?) ★

GENGHIS KHAN
Infogrames £39.99

Uppers – Stylish and fairly deep historical strategy game. ***Downers*** – Ridiculously expensive though, and requires a fair dose of manual reading. ***The Bottom Line*** – A bit of a cliché, but 'good if you like that sort of thing.' ★★★

GHOST BATTLE
Thalion £25.53

Uppers – The sound's quite good and the graphics are okay. ***Downers*** – Everything else is utterly awful. ***The Bottom Line*** – Badly-designed and executed *Ghosts'n'Goblins* clone that's so bad it's scary. ★

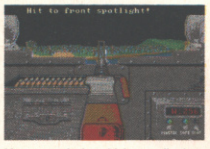
GODS
Renegade £25.53

Uppers – Lovely aesthetics, quite involved for a platform game. ***Downers*** – Not quite as good as it's made out to be. And those graphics are far too clever for their own good. ***The Bottom Line*** – Don't believe the hype, but pretty damn good all the same. ★★★★

GRAND PRIX MASTER
Dinamic £19.95

Uppers – Endorsed by Jorge Martinez (apparently famous on the 80cc motorcycle circuit). ***Downers*** – Handles like a Reliant Robin. ***The Bottom Line*** – Not to put too fine a point on it, useless. ★

GUNBOAT
Accolade £29.99



Uppers – A sim which actually does something different. ***Downers*** – The action doesn't really convey enough excitement, and the graphics are a little on the primitive side. ***Bottom Line*** – A highly complex sim, this takes quite some time to get drawn into. ★★★

HAGAR THE HORRIBLE
Kingsoft £25.99

Uppers – A good rendition of the Hagar character, and an engaging enough game behind the licence. ***Downers*** – It's not really any better than Hi-Tec's *Scooby & Scrabby* (which is a helluVa lot cheaper). ***The Bottom Line*** – Not bad at all. But nothing very spectacular either. ★★★

HALLS OF MONTEZUMA
Electronic Arts £25.99

Uppers – Almost unlimited lastability, thanks to the huge numbers of scenarios. ***Downers*** – Off-puttingly complicated, and offers nothing new to the unconverted. ***Bottom Line*** – Well put together, but still strictly for diehards. ★★

HAMMERFIST
Activision £24.99

Uppers – Graphically adept arcade adventure with tons of playability and plenty to keep you going. ***Downers*** – Iffy sound. ***The Bottom Line*** – Thoroughly enjoyable (if you like that sort of thing). ★★★

HARD DRIVIN' II
Tengen (Domark) £24.99

Uppers – Refined version of the original – less bugs, a track editor, a neat 'head-to-head' option if you link two machines... ***Downers*** – ...but still glitchy and not a patch on the arcade machine. ***The Bottom Line*** – Souped up, but not souped up enough. ★★

HEART OF THE DRAGON
Avatar Computing £25.99

Uppers – Lots of colours, and an (almost serious) attempt to do something new with the fantasy beat-'em-up. ***Downers*** – Beyond the almost impressive technical trickery lies not very much at all really. ***The Bottom Line*** – If your friend has bought it, give it a go. Then laugh very heartily at him. Entertaining in an embarrassing sort of way. ★

HEIMDALL
Core Design £30.99

Uppers – Stunningly pretty and atmospheric, and it's absolutely enormous too. The cartoon-style is just gorgeous. ***Downers*** – Some nasty disk swapping and accessing, though not quite to Cinemaware 'standards'. ***The Bottom Line*** – A fast-moving and slick RPG game that's miles more accessible than the genre usually is. A winner. ★★★★★

HERO QUEST
Gremlin £25.99

Uppers – Easy to get into, and deceptively addictive. You don't think you've been playing it for long, but suddenly it's Thursday and you're a week late for dinner. ***Downers*** – Not so good as a one-player game. ***The Bottom Line*** – Perhaps surprisingly, a highly entertaining game, and absolutely ideal when you've got game-playing friends round. ★★★★

HERO QUEST: RETURN OF THE WITCHLORD
Gremlin £14.99

Uppers – An add-on module for fans of the original *Hero Quest* who want to take their characters into harder territory. ***Downers*** – Not a lot of use to anybody else, but that's a bit inevitable. ***The Bottom Line*** – If you liked *Hero Quest*, then this is an obvious (and fairly inexpensive) purchase. ★★★★

HILL STREET BLUES
Krisalis £24.99

Uppers – A good feel for the TV series; characters (both player and others) that you can identify with. It's certainly an interesting way to handle a licence. ***Downers*** – Gets repetitive pretty quickly, and it's not the slickest game around. ***The Bottom Line*** – A good next step for someone who's played *Sim City* to death and fancies a new challenge. Limited appeal, though. ★★★

HORROR ZOMBIES FROM THE CRYPT
Millennium £24.99

Uppers – Unusual idea; suitably spooky graphics. ***Downers*** – But let down by the dull platform nature of the game. ***The Bottom Line*** – Funny to watch, but fairly average to play. ★★

HUDSON HAWK
Ocean £25.99

Uppers – A film licence which actually stands up as a game in its own right. ***Downers*** – The control system can reduce some to tears, and it doesn't match *The Blues Brothers* in the arcade adventure/platform stakes. ***The Bottom Line*** – A well produced, but infuriatingly difficult, game. Try before you buy. ★★★★

HUNTER
Activision £25.99

Uppers – Stunning 3D graphics and loads to do. ***Downers*** – The odd little graphical glitch or two. ***Bottom Line*** – Enormously absorbing game – you'll find yourself completely captivated by it for hours on end. ★★★★★

INDIANA JONES ADVENTURE
US Gold £19.99

Uppers – More fine-tuning gives *Indy* the friendliest control system yet. It's pretty faithful to the movie too! ***Downers*** – Waiting for Indy to trek across the screen all the time can get annoying and some of the puzzles are just a wee bit too abstract. ***The Bottom Line*** – One of the best Amiga adventures available. ★★★★

INDIANAPOLIS 500
Electronic Arts £24.95

Uppers – An immensely playable blend of true racing sim and quick track blast, with a nice line in remote camera views (if you've got a 1 meg machine). ***Downers*** – Track repetition hinders lasting appeal. ***The Bottom Line*** – Just fabulous. ★★★★★

INTERNATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIP ATHLETICS
Hawk £25.99

Uppers – Tons of fun for those who miss the days of joystick waggling. ***Downers*** – Terrible presentation, and a highly questionable price. ***The Bottom Line*** – If only it had been a tenner cheaper... ★★★

I PLAY 3D SOCCER
Simulmondo £25.99

Uppers – The most dynamic and visually convincing representation of the sport yet. ***Downers*** – The realism is so high that you hardly ever get to kick the ball, and the 3D display system can be downright confusing. ***The Bottom Line*** – Brave, but ultimately flawed. ★★

IRON LORD
Ubi Soft £24.99

Uppers – Cinemaware-style medieval epic with plenty of sub-games and atmospheric presentation. ***Downers*** – It's just too tough for most, and with little real depth. ***The Bottom Line*** – Ultimately repetitive, but fun for a while. ★★

ISHIDO
Accolade £24.99

Uppers – Take *Othello*, add some *Go*, then throw in a few herbs and spices and heat until brown. The result is one piping hot Chinese board game called *Ishido*. ***Downers*** – Irritating dialogue boxes, and the luck element can infuriate. ***The Bottom Line*** – An engaging piece of Chinese culture, which should really be played with a good strong cup of tea. ★★

JAHANGIR KHAN'S CHAMPIONSHIP SQUASH
Krisalis £25.53

Uppers – Easy to play, closely adheres to the rules of the real thing, and there're plenty of options on offer. ***Downers*** – There's not really a lot you can do with a squash game, is there? ***The Bottom Line*** – The best squash game around for the Amiga. (Not that there's much in the way of competition). ★★★

JIMMY WHITE'S WHIRLWIND SNOOKER
Virgin £24.99

Uppers – Stunning 3D camera-style view on the action, and the actual rules and physical mechanics of the game are re-created beautifully. ***Downers*** – Well, it's still only snooker. Some extra stats would have been nice too. ***Bottom Line*** – A veritable corker. A classic. A 90 percenter. Need we say more? ★★★★★

JUDGE DREDD
Virgin £24.99

Uppers – Two ancient sub-games offer a real rave from the grave. ***Downers*** – Another *Judge Dredd* game screwed up totally. No humour, no graphics, no game. ***The Bottom Line*** – One day somebody will do justice (ahem) to the legend of Dredd. One day. ★

JUPITER'S MASTERDRIVE
Ubi Soft £24.99

Uppers – Surprisingly playable race game. More fun than a packet of Jammy Dodgers. ***Downers*** – Unspectacular and overpriced. ***The Bottom Line*** – Not sure why, but it really is jolly good fun. ★★

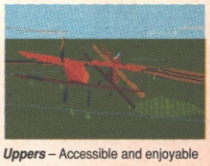
KEEF THE THIEF
Electronic Arts £24.99

Uppers – Excellent hack, slash and puzzle solving with some superb stylised graphics. ***Downers*** – It still plays like your average role-playing adventure. ***The Bottom Line*** – Respectable Tolkien-esque fare. ★★★

KNIGHTMARE
Mindscape £30.99

Uppers – The *Captive* system given a more appropriate fantasy setting. More compact too. ***Downers*** – Not enough thought put into the concept, and the difficulty is pitched all wrong. ***The Bottom Line*** – It feels too much like role-playing by numbers. ★★★

KNIGHTS OF THE SKY
MicroProse £34.99



Uppers – Accessible and enjoyable to play, in a not-very-flight-simmy

NOW HAS THE 1991/2 FOOTBALL LEAGUE/NFL PLAYER DATA

DIVISION ONE '92

"(The Midnight Oil) treats soccer in the sophisticated way Americans treat their national sports."
The Guardian.

THE GAME. Everyone has his own ideas on what makes a soccer team "tick". Here is the opportunity to put into practice your own ideas. Operating from the English 1st Division you must build a squad to challenge for the league title, the FA and League Cups and the 3 European trophies. And as players age, rebuild the team while holding off relegation.
SQUADS/TRANSFER MARKET. In a 3 squad system (1st team squad, reserve squad and youth squad), use the continuous intake of youth players and training program to create a squad whose skills reflect your ideas. Supplement these skills with carefully selected transfer market acquisitions. As they age, veterans fade and youngsters develop, keep a sharp eye on the changing skills of your team.
SKILLS. All players have a balance of 5 skills (no "skill levels") which you must discover by experimenting with your team. Even more important will be your judgement about the effect of the particular team balance or skill combination on the outcome of a match, and subsequently a season of football. Suitable training can develop/enhance skills or sustain the stamina of ageing/injured players.
MATCH/STATS. Your judgement will be put to the test in this unique 4 minute match/stats simulation against accurately simulated opposition. This is the measure of your team and your most reliable source of information. There are displays of: match flow, two teams, player-with-the-ball, injuries, discipline, substitutions, in-match tactics, goalscorers, possession breakdown and performance assessment.
WHAT IS DIFFERENT ABOUT THIS GAME?
Sophisticated "AI" techniques replace "skill levels". Judgement replaces mental arithmetic. Intelligence replaces luck. Division One 92 is a simulation of the world of the soccer manager. Its fascination comes from its closeness to the real thing, its addictive quality is that of soccer itself.

HEADCOACH V3

"When it comes to the 4th down HeadCoach has it."
"HeadCoach", "TV Sports Football" head to head (Pop Comp.)

THE GAME. HeadCoach is the complete American Football simulation. You take charge of the latest recruit to the NFL, and through skillful design of gameplans and the use of the college draft, build up a 45 man squad to keep your fans happy and win the SuperBowl. Unlimited seasons and ageing players produce a realistic game of fluctuating fortunes.
THE MATCH. The match is a game in itself taking about 40 minutes to complete. With 26 offensive plays and 21 defensive plays, there is ample scope to match your game-plan to the skills of your squad, and exploit the weaknesses of the opposition. It's here where the strengths and weaknesses of your players are highlighted.
TRAINING CAMP. An opportunity to assess your players before they take the field. The appropriate coach will give you his view of the current form of any of the players and how they are performing in training. A 40 yard timed run will reveal their sharpness. Wide receivers, running backs, linebackers, cornerbacks and safeties need to shine here.
COLLEGE DRAFT. During the 16 match season, plus whatever playoff matches you achieve, you will find yourself praying for a second classy running back or wide receiver, or need to beef up your offensive line (too many sacks). The college draft should be used to find those stars of the future and make sure they're playing for you.
STATISTICS. The statistics centre will encapsulate your team's and your player's season. Total yards, rushing yards, passing yards, kick-off returns, punt returns (and averages for all these), interceptions, sacks....all these are kept for each match, the whole season, for the team and for each player. American Football is a game of stats and we retain that.

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kind of way. ***Downers*** – Erm, well, there aren't quite as many buttons as some flight sims. ***The Bottom Line*** – Much more playable than you might expect, this is the surprise hit of the year in the AMIGA POWER office. ★★★★★

THE KILLING CLOUD
Image Works £24.99

Uppers – Fast-moving and pretty graphics, bags of depth, and a great creation of atmosphere. ***Downers*** – Riddled with inconsistencies. ***The Bottom Line*** – Could have been a contender, but badly lets itself down in the logic stakes. ★★★

KING'S BOUNTY
New World Computing £25.99

Uppers – Accessible and tidily presented, and far more playable for the non-expert than anything in this field we've seen. ***Downers*** – Nothing beyond the fact that some people won't ever get to grips with this sort of game. ***The Bottom Line*** – Superb D&D-style adventure that's fun for everyone but the most narrow of mind. ★★★★

KING'S QUEST V
Sierra £39.99

Uppers – Beautiful digitised graphics and a very friendly point and click interface. ***Downers*** – The price is one obvious downside, and only hard drive owners should bother. ***The Bottom Line*** – A mighty impressive adventure, which takes Sierra to new heights. ★★★★

LAST NINJA 2
System 3 £24.99

Uppers – Excellent 3D isometric graphics and a genuine attempt to inject some strategy into the martial arts genre. ***Downers*** – The game just isn't cohesive, and it plays like a pig. ***The Bottom Line*** – Not really in the Bruce Lee league (barely scraping Jackie Chan level to be honest). ★★

LANCASTER
Actual Screenshots £24.95

Uppers – Fairly impressive 3D polygon graphics. ***Downers*** – Lack of variation and any real excitement means it barely gets off the ground. ***The Bottom Line*** – Elevates averageness to an art form. ★★

LAST NINJA 3
System 3 £25.99

Uppers – Polished presentation and big improvements in look, feel and plot in the ninja's third outing. ***Downers*** – A diabolical control system and one or two flaws in execution prove major irritations. ***The Bottom Line*** – For those who go for these beat-'em-up adventures, *Last Ninja 3* is heaven sent. Others will wish to give it a wide berth. ★★★★

LEISURE SUIT LARRY III
Sierra £34.99

Uppers – Ridiculous, over-sexed plot. Adventuring for consenting adults. ***Downers*** – Slightly obtrusive command parser, and as usual it's over-priced. ***The Bottom Line*** – Check it out – but only if you are over eighteen. ★★★

LEMMINGS
Psygnosis £24.99

Uppers – Utterly bizarre, pleasingly original and totally addictive. Invents a totally new category – the save-'em-up. ***Downers*** – As is the norm with such strikingly original concepts, some may wonder just what all the fuss is about. ***The Bottom Line*** – Love it or loathe it, you can't ignore it. *Lemmings* rule. ★★★★★

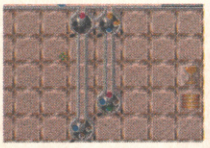
LIFE AND DEATH
Mindscape £25.53

Uppers – Excellent packaging (the surgical mask and gloves are wild), and some fairly amusing gameplay keeps things on the boil for a couple of hours. ***Downers*** – Repetition soon sets in – as a long-term challenge it all falls apart quite alarmingly. ***The Bottom Line*** – What's there is quite good, but there's just not enough of it. ★★

LIVING JIGSAWS
Miles Computing £24.99

Uppers – Likely to appeal to the younger Amiga users. ***Downers*** – Unlikely to appeal to anybody else, anywhere. ***The Bottom Line*** – Lacks any charm whatsoever. Quite silly and pointless all round, really. ★

LOGICAL
Rainbow Arts £19.99



Uppers – The ease of play makes this a nicely accessible puzzler. ***Downers*** – But the amount of time each move takes also makes it a seriously tedious one. ***The Bottom Line*** – In a crowded world of puzzle games, *Logical* is very blunt in the mustard area. ★★

LORD OF THE RINGS
Electronic Arts £29.99

Uppers – A brilliant command system and excellent evocation of Tolkien's classic story. ***Downers*** – Everything is simply too slow and vast. Surely it could have been programmed better than this. ***The Bottom Line*** – Some great ideas, but the game just over-stretches itself. A shame. ★★★

LORDS OF CHAOS
Blade £24.99

Uppers – Great control system, comprehensive and logical. Lots of levels equal great lastability. ***Downers*** – Very little action; not much compulsion to reach your rather abstract goal. ***The Bottom Line*** – A disappointing game from Julian Gollop, not up to his usual standard. Wait for *Laser Squad 2*. ★★★

LORDS OF DOOM
Starbyte £25.99

Uppers – Not the lowest-scoring game to grace the AMIGA POWER pages. ***Downers*** – An adventure (with a smattering of D&D) of the worst kind. ***The Bottom Line*** – It would have looked ridiculously dated three years ago. ★

LOTUS TURBO CHALLENGE II
Gremlin £24.99

Uppers – Gorgeous graphics, lashings of speed and that hard-to-capture driving atmosphere. ***Downers*** – The lack of crashes is a bit silly, and some track maps would have helped. ***The Bottom Line*** – The best sprite-based driving game we've seen. ★★★★★

LUPO ALBERTO
Idea £25.53

Uppers – Charming characters, a terribly translated manual, and goofy gameplay make it ideal for kids of all ages. ***Downers*** – The animation is funny for all the wrong reasons. Loveable but really rather crap. ***The Bottom Line*** – A game sure to cause argument. A case of try before you buy. ★★

MAGIC GARDEN
Electronic Zoo £25.99

Uppers – An outlandish (and gnomish) *Sim City*-ish kind of thing (sort of). ***Downers*** – Is there any demand for this sort of thing? ***The Bottom Line*** – For a game which is based around gardening, you just can't see the wood for the twee. ★★

MAGIC POCKETS
Renegade £25.99

Uppers – The usual Bitmap standards of technical excellence, and a veritable mountain of clever ideas. ***Downers*** – The graphics don't suit the game style, the design is too clever for its own good, and the pacing is hopelessly wrong. ***The Bottom Line*** – It'll sell a million, but everyone we've met finds it seriously boring. As a cute arcade platform game it's a disaster. ★★★

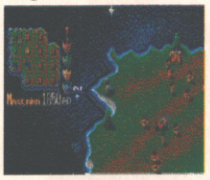
MANCHESTER UNITED EUROPE
Krisalis £25.99

Uppers – Fast, pretty, and hugely playable. ***Downers*** – The strategy section is largely superficial (and what there is is optional). ***Bottom Line*** – Great control makes this just about the best football sim so far. ★★★★

MAUPITI ISLAND
Lankhor £25.99

Uppers – Pleasantly different, with loads of character interaction. ***Downers*** – Just too small to really justify the price. ***Bottom Line*** – Charming and interesting, but there just isn't enough of it. ★★★

MEGA LO MANIA
Image Works £30.99



Uppers – Brilliant sound effects, gorgeous speech, jolly nice graphics, completely compulsive gameplay. ***Downers*** – Perhaps just a tad frustrating at times. ***The Bottom Line*** – The most accessible and arguably the most enjoyable god-sim to date. ★★★★★

MEGA TRAVELLER 1
Empire £30.64

Uppers – Terrifying depth, friendly and helpful controls, great atmosphere, excellent balance of strategy and action. ***Downers*** – It might all seem a bit too familiar to *Elite* players; occasional long disk-access pauses can irritate. ***The Bottom Line*** – A wonderful piece of role-playing software that everyone should play at least once. After that, you're unlikely to want to stop. ★★★★

MERCS
US Gold £24.99

Uppers – Faithful conversion of the coin-op, good-looking and fast-moving... ***Downers*** – ...but still just another *Commando* clone. ***The Bottom Line*** – Great at what it does, but you're likely to want rather more from a game in this day and age. ★★★

METAL MUTANT
Silmarils £25.99

Uppers – A simple concept (exploration, fighting and puzzle solving) which works well, and has a perfect difficulty curve. ***Downers*** – Lacking any really exciting features, and too simple for some. ***The Bottom Line*** – A middle-of-the-road game, which achieves what it sets out to do, but doesn't really astound. ★★★

MICROPROSE GOLF
MicroProse £34.99

Uppers – Looks wonderful, and just about every conceivable variation of golf is covered. ***Downers*** – Seriously overpriced, can be a bit uninvolving, and the graphical 'fog' is unfortunate and disappointing. ***The Bottom Line*** – A great golf game which just fails to match up to the standard set by *PGA Tour*. ★★★★

MIDNIGHT RESISTANCE
Ocean £24.99

Uppers – Well-balanced gameplay with a smooth difficulty curve makes it stand out from a hundred similar coin-op conversions. Actually more playable than the arcade original. ***Downers*** – Control is awkward at first; could be a touch faster. ***The Bottom Line*** – Best of its type. ★★★

MIGHTY BOMB JACK
Elite £24.99

Uppers – Classic gameplay with added 16-bit features like, erm, power-ups. ***Downers*** – Sprawling levels lose the original's frantic urgency. ***The Bottom Line*** – Dull, dull, and then again dull. Did we mention it was dull? ★

MIG-29
Domark £29.99

Uppers – So real you'll be be hanging pictures of Gorby on your wall. ***Downers*** – Only five missions, with little in the way of excitement. ***The Bottom Line*** – Brave, but ultimately just too techie for most Amiga owners. ★★★

MIG 29M SUPER FULCRUM
Domark £39.99

Uppers – For the serious minded flight sim fans, *MiG29M* offers a superior trip, which manages to avoided cloning its predecessor. ***Downers*** – Way short of its competitors in areas such as ground detail and instant action. ***The Bottom Line*** – Expensive, but fans of the original won't be disappointed. ★★★★

MOONSTONE
Mindscape £30.99

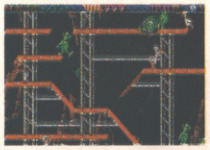
Uppers – Atmospheric visuals and sound effects create a spooky game world. ***Downers*** – There's not enough of anything. Awkward disk accessing breaks the flow of the game too. ***The Bottom Line*** – A

simple, arguably mediocre game, hidden beneath glossy presentation.★★★

MONOPOLY
Leisure Genius £19.99

Uppers – A faithful version of the classic (to say the least) board-game. ***Downers*** – Who the hell wants to play a board-game on their computer anyway? ***The Bottom Line*** – Competently done, but arguably quite pointless. ★★

MONSTER BUSINESS
Eclipse £19.99



Uppers – Tons of character and classically simple *Dig Dug*-meets-*Snow Bros* gameplay make this endless fun for nostalgic arcade fans. Great music too, and a halfway-decent price tag. ***Downers*** – Once more, 'simple arcade fun' translates directly as 'shallow and transient kiddie rubbish' for some. ***The Bottom Line*** – A superb arcade platform game with more life in it than a hundred copies of *Magic Pockets*. ★★★★

MOONBASE
Mindscape £35.99

Uppers – Entertaining and addictive game in the best *Sim City* tradition. ***Downers*** – Just a bit too close to *Sim City* for comfort, though. ***Bottom Line*** – Fairly short-term entertainment, and more than a touch overpriced. ★★★

MOONSHINE RACERS
Millennium £24.99

Uppers – Erm, great hillbilly music. ***Downers*** – Slow, graphically horrible, totally derivative. ***The Bottom Line*** – Almost as bad as Amiga *Chase HQ*, and you've got to admit that's pretty damn bad. ★

MUDS
Rainbow Arts £24.99

Uppers – Quite funny. ***Downers*** – Do we really need another rugby/basketball/ violence-based future sport? ***The Bottom Line*** – Giving everything silly names doesn't make this game different to the dozen others it's just the same as. ★★

'NAM
Domark £24.95

Uppers – Heavily researched, convincing and (dirty word) educational strategic war game. ***Downers*** – Very hard to win, the whole serious look to the thing could be a turn off. ***The Bottom Line*** – Political as well as tactical decision making gives a new dimension to war games. ★★★

NARC
Ocean £24.99

Uppers – Great blood-spattering

action; very close to the coin-op. ***Downers*** – Very dodgy on the playability front (not to say morally). ***The Bottom Line*** – Limited. ★★

NARCO POLICE
Dinamic £24.99

Uppers – Looks excellent. ***Downers*** – Computer takes a 'creative' attitude towards obeying control commands. ***The Bottom Line*** – Loud and action-packed blaster for expert commandos. ★★

NAVY SEALS
Ocean £25.39

Uppers – Quite good fun in a mindless arcade runaround sort of way. ***Downers*** – Technically unimpressive (to say the least), and there's very little to it. ***Bottom Line*** – Looks like an ST port, but if you can forget you paid £25 for it, it's pretty enjoyable. ★★

NAPOLEON 1
Internecine £29.99

Uppers – Historically accurate and all that kind of stuff – Boney fanatics will love it. ***Downers*** – ...but everyone else will be left completely cold. There's no attempt made to make the game accessible, it's purely for those who already know they're going to buy it before they ever see the thing. ***The Bottom Line*** – If you don't love the concept immediately, give this an extra-wide berth. ★★

NEBULUS 2 – POGO A-GO-GO
21st Century Entertainment £25.99

Uppers – The winning formula of the original is at the core of the game. ***Downers*** – The addition of power ups ruins the beautiful simplicity which made the first such a classic. ***The Bottom Line*** – A real waste. This is the worst kind of sequel, one which just regurgitates the ideas of its predecessor, but in a far less playable way. ★★★★

NECRONOM
Linel £25.99

Uppers – Behind all the technical boasting lies a groovy little blaster. ***Downers*** – It's not going to win any awards, and it's impossible without autofire. ***The Bottom Line*** – A pretty damn good little blaster. ★★★★

NINJA WARRIORS
Virgin £19.99

Uppers – Novel 'Cinemascope'-esque screen layout. Dynamic Loading System is a boon but doesn't get rid of irritating swapping. ***Downers*** – Extremely repetitive action palls quickly. ***The Bottom Line*** – Even for a game of this type, the gameplay is too limited to hold the attention for any length of time. ★★

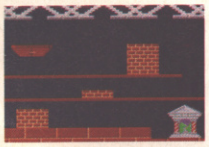
NITRO
Psygnosis £24.99

Uppers – Groovy graphics, smooth scrolling, excellent car-handling. ***Downers*** – A practically infinite-credit system means the game has little sense of urgency. You have to guess the course on later levels. ***The Bottom Line*** – Needs more in the way of immediate danger,to be addictive, but (unlike many similar games) is as fun in one player mode as with a couple of chums. ★★★

OBITUS
Psygnosis £34.99

Uppers – Intro would make a great Amiga *Deathchase* game. ***Downers*** – *Obitus* itself is a dull *Dungeon Master* rip-off. ***The Bottom Line*** – Boring and ridiculously priced. ★★

OH NO! MORE LEMMINGS!
Psygnosis £25.99 (or £19.99 as an add-on for the original)



Uppers – The same classic game it always was. ***Downers*** – Where's the imagination that gave *Lemmings* its character in the first place? ***The Bottom Line*** – A missed opportunity, but still a brilliant game. ★★★★

OPERATION THUNDERBOLT
Ocean £24.99

Uppers – Utterly mindless genocidal slaughterfest; perhaps the best *Op Wolf* style game to date. ***Downers*** – More of the coin-op's appeal is down to the cabinet-mounted Uzi than you might think, leaving the Amiga version somewhat 'flat'. ***The Bottom Line*** – Everything you could expect a conversion of *Operation Thunderbolt* to be. ★★★

OUTRUN EUROPA
US Gold £24.95

Uppers – A vast improvement on earlier *OutRun* games, the use of different vehicles adding spice. ***Downers*** – The driving feel isn't as good as it might have been and the levels aren't sufficiently different. ***The Bottom Line*** – A class driving act, but its fails to compete with the likes of *Lotus II*. ★★★★

PGA TOUR GOLF
Electronic Arts £24.99

Uppers – Excellently presented, comprehensive, and easy as pie to get into. ***Downers*** – There's a limited amount of scope to any golf game, and *PGA* doesn't even try to transcend it. ***The Bottom Line*** – The pinnacle of Amiga golf so far. ★★★★★

PEGASUS
Gremlin £25.99

Uppers – Two different genres for your money – *Rastan*-type slasher and *R-Type*-ish shoot-'em-up. ***Downers*** – Neither game style is very well executed. ***The Bottom Line*** – Unexciting and generally totally average game seriously lacking in character. ★★★

PIT-FIGHTER
Domark £24.99

Uppers – Interesting and distinctive looking beat-'em-up. ***Downers*** – The 3D effect and digitised sprites aren't entirely convincing, and gameplay very shallow. ***The Bottom Line*** – A close conversion of a pretty thin arcade game. ★★

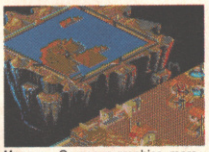
POLICE QUEST 2
Sierra (Activision) £34.95

Uppers – Er, very realistic sim of a policeman's lot. ***Downers*** – ie half the game is form-filling. ***The Bottom Line*** – Too much like a tedious day at the office. ★★

POPULOUS
Electronic Arts £10.99

Uppers – Totally unique gameplay and smooth 3D isometric graphics add up to a game with depth and sparkle. ***Downers*** – The icon control system really is very confusing. ***The Bottom Line*** – An essential for all open-minded Amiga owners. ★★★★★

POPULOUS II
Electronic Arts £29.99



Uppers – Gorgeous graphics, more options and variety than before, and superbly paced action. ***Downers*** – It's really not all that different from the first game at all, more of a serious update than anything else. ***The Bottom Line*** – An absolutely wonderful game, the only flaw in which is the similarity to its predecessor. If you didn't buy *Populous*, though, don't even think about missing this. ★★★★★

THE POWER
Demonware £24.99

Uppers – Heaps of levels and a screen designer keep lasting appeal up, and the music is excellent. ***Downers*** – A touch derivative, and lacks that indefinable something that makes a puzzle game great. ***The Bottom Line*** – Try before you buy – you might like it, but rather average to our eyes. ★★★

POWER DRIFT
Activision £19.99

Uppers – All the arcade's tracks, characters, and secret features. ***Downers*** – The graphics can get very confusing, and the gameplay isn't really that close to the original. ***The Bottom Line*** – A good stab at a very difficult conversion, but not quite good enough. ★★★

PP HAMMER AND HIS PNEUMATIC WEAPON
Demonware £25.53

Uppers – Nicely old-fashioned platform action. Plenty of scope for double entrendres too. ***Downers*** – Annoying niggles and a tendency towards over-complication spoil it a bit. ***The Bottom Line*** – Good, but it could easily have been a lot better. ★★★

PREHISTORIK
Titus £25.53

Uppers – Some excellent cartoon graphics and humorous touches make it an instantly likeable game. ***Downers*** – Suffers in comparison to *Toki* and *Chuck Rock*. Needs a number of rough edges polishing up. ***The Bottom Line*** – A nice enough little caveman romp, but it's not really an essential purchase. ★★★

PREDATOR 2
Image Works £25.99

Uppers – Lots and lots of zapping to be done and, er, that's about it really. ***Downers*** – Poor colour choice, unimaginative gameplay, bad control feel. ***The Bottom Line*** – Not as good as *Operation Wolf*, and now some £18 more expensive. Don't bother. ★★

PRINCE OF PERSIA
Broderbund £24.99

Uppers – Phenomenal animation, loads of atmosphere and some good old-fashioned gameplay. ***Downers*** – Control is initially tricky, and getting sent to the start of a level every time you die is always annoying. ***The Bottom Line*** – Technically stunning and great fun at the same time. Why can't all games be like this? ★★★★★

PROFLIGHT
Hi Soft £39.95

Uppers – Terrifyingly accurate – possibly the most accurate flight simulator ever. ***Downers*** – Such a good simulator that there isn't really room for any game at all. ***Bottom Line*** – Miles too realistic to be any fun to play. Still, it's less expensive than a real flying lesson. ★★

PRO TENNIS TOUR 2
Ubi Soft £24.99

Uppers – Possibly the most realistic sports sim to grace the Amiga, with features galore. ***Downers*** – So if you hate the real thing, you won't go for this. ***The Bottom Line*** – Nothing short of wonderful. ★★★★

PURSUIT TO EARTH
Exocet £19.95

Uppers – Reminiscent of *Gyruss*, the classic arcade zapper. ***Downers*** – But completely crap. ***The Bottom Line*** – About as much fun as getting hit by a real Exocet. ★

QUEST FOR GLORY II – TRIAL BY FIRE
Sierra £40.85

Uppers – Sorry, can't think of any. Oh no, wait, you *do* get lots of disks for your money. ***Downers*** – But no game to put on them. Incompetently programmed, dreadfully-designed, staggeringly-overpriced trash. ***The Bottom Line*** – Possibly the worst Amiga fantasy role-playing game you will ever see. Avoid it like an bad-tempered tiger with toothache. ★

RAILROAD TYCOON
MicroProse £29.99

Uppers – Frightening amount of depth. ***Downers*** – Very slow to get into (and very slow even when you *do* get into it). ***The Bottom Line*** – If you've got a lot of time to invest in it, well worth a look. *Sim City* is still the better of the two, though. ★★★★

RALLY CROSS CHALLENGE
Anco £19.95

Uppers – Well-programmed *Super Sprint* clone that's great fun with multiple players. ***Downers*** – Limited lastability. ***The Bottom Line*** – Still one of the best in its field, but that's more down to lack of competition than anything else. ★★

RBI TWO BASEBALL
Domark £29.99

Uppers – Excellent simulation of baseball, and beautifully presented to boot. ***Downers*** – Over-priced and not all that hot on lasting appeal. ***Bottom Line*** – Very good, but a bit limited, and not quite a classic. ★★★★

REALMS
Virgin £29.99

Uppers – An interesting and slickly presented variation on the Kingdoms theme. The great battle sequences really make the game. ***Downers*** – There can be just too much routine realm-keeping. ***The Bottom Line*** – It'll take a little used to, but basically a terrific game. ★★★★

RENEGADE LEGION INTERCEPTOR
SSI/US Gold £24.99

Uppers – Military hardware a-go-go gives it instant RPG appeal. ***Downers*** – The strategy isn't deep enough, and the action sequences are way out of date. ***Bottom Line*** – Tales of galactic empires and warfare are a good idea, but this one just falls flat. ★

REVELATION
Krisalis £19.99

Uppers – Neat idea – a puzzle game based on safe cracking. ***Downers*** – Too complex to just pick up and play – bad news for a puzzler. ***The Bottom Line*** – Not bad, but could have been better presented (and who thought up that utterly meaningless name?) ★★

RISE OF THE DRAGON
Sierra £34.99

Uppers – Atmospheric Blade Runner-style first-person adventure which combines digitised photos and comic-book presentation. ***Downers*** – Another hard drive game, and its not the most complex adventure ever. ***The Bottom Line*** – Brave, different and involving. ★★★★

ROBOCOD
Millennium £24.99

Uppers – Wit, console-style graphics and gameplay hide behind a barrage of visual jokes and puns. ***Downers*** – Perhaps it could have been a little 'tighter'. ***The Bottom Line*** – Almost as impressive as *Rainbow Islands*! ★★★★★

ROBIN HOOD
Millennium £25.99

Uppers – Witty and cheerful game that makes you love it almost in spite of itself. ***Downers*** – Tiny graphics can get irritating, and there are lots of silly little quirks. ***The Bottom Line*** – Likeable game that's a long way short of classic status, but damn good fun all the same. ★★★★

ROBOZONE
Image Works £25.99

Uppers – Three totally different elements (*Killing Game Show*

variant, *Dungeon Master* style sub-game, and *R-Type*-esque scroller) in one game... ***Downers*** – ...none of which are done at all well. ***The Bottom Line*** – Overpriced as a budget game (nice front-end sequence though). ★

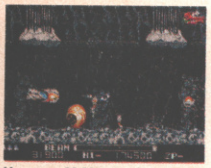
RODLAND
Storm £25.99

Uppers – Too-cute-to-be-true graphics, wonderful presentation, a near-perfect arcade game in the traditional sense. ***Downers*** – If you're looking for depth and complexity, look somewhere else. ***The Bottom Line*** – A magnificent conversion that actually improves significantly on the original coin-op. Loveable and extremely addictive, you couldn't ask for a better platform arcade game. ★★★★★

ROLLING RONNY
Virgin £25.99

Uppers – Cute, console-style graphics and easy-to-grasp platform gameplay give *Ronny* instant appeal. ***Downers*** – Beneath the varnish lies not very much at all. ***The Bottom Line*** – A very plain game which offers nothing new to Amiga gamers. ★★

R-TYPE II
Activision £25.99



Uppers – 99.99% arcade-perfect, and a beautiful and addictive shoot-'em-up in its own right. ***Downers*** – A couple of tiny bugs, and maybe off-puttingly difficult. (For wimps, anyway). ***Bottom Line*** – The best space blast for the Amiga yet, and possibly the best coin-op conversion too. Absolutely superb. ★★★★★

RUGBY – THE WORLD CUP
Domark £25.99

Uppers – Fast, slick and frenetic action, and brilliant as a two-player game. ***Downers*** – Sacrifices a lot of realism in the quest for flowing play, like penalties for a start. ***The Bottom Line*** – An excellent rendition of the sport which puts playability before authenticity to great effect. ★★★★★

SARAKON
Virgin £19.99

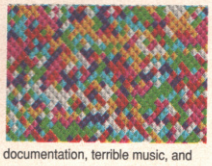
Uppers – Brilliant *Shanghai*-inspired gameplay make this a strategy classic, and the price is a nice surprise. ***Downers*** – Slightly indistinct symbols can occasionally confuse matters. ***The Bottom Line*** – A supremely addictive puzzler, in the finest 'takes over your entire life' tradition. ★★★★

SEARCH FOR THE KING
Accolade £34.99

Uppers – Superb Elvis gags and attention to detail (particularly in the graphics) mean graphic adventure fans will take to it immediately. ***Downers*** – Accolade blow it to a certain extent with their inefficient parser system. ***The Bottom Line*** – Still a long way to go before it competes with the likes of *Monkey Island*. ★★★

7 COLOURS
Infogrames £19.99

Uppers – Interesting Othello-based concept. ***Downers*** – Useless



documentation, terrible music, and relies too heavily on luck for a board game. ***The Bottom Line*** – More or less okay for the first few hours, but rapidly gets horribly boring. ★★

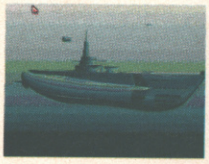
SHADOW SORCERER
US Gold £27.99

Uppers – Very different to the usual SSI orc-slashing fare. ***Downers*** – Disjointed plot and badly thought-out playing system means it never really gets going. ***The Bottom Line*** – Neither as playable as *Hero Quest* or as hardcore as *Eye Of The Beholder*, *Shadow Sorceror* falls uncomfortably between two stools. ★★★

SHANGHAI
Activision £19.99

Uppers – Based on an ancient Chinese tile game, so you know it's going to torture your mind, and it does. Friendly presentation too, and the multi-player against-the-clock games are action-packed enough for the most frenzied blasting fan. ***Downers*** – Slightly fiddly graphics can play havoc with your eyes. ***The Bottom Line*** – Scarily gripping for a game with no moving graphics. The first time you do it you'll want to take out an advert in The Times to tell everybody. ★★★★★

SILENT SERVICE 2
MicroProse £34.99



Uppers – Engrossing and accurate simulation that could well take over your life. ***Downers*** – If you're not into military strategy, this has little chance of changing your mind. ***The Bottom Line*** – All you sub fans (yes, you!) will know what to expect, so dive in. ★★★★

THE SIMPSONS
Ocean £24.99

Uppers – A good licence AND a good game. Brilliant console-like scrolling arcade platform sort of thing. ***Downers*** – The main game doesn't really rely on the Simpsons theme, and a bit too complicated for Bart's younger fans. ***The Bottom Line*** – The licence of the year, quite probably. ★★★★

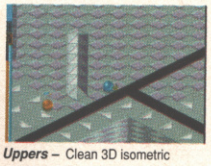
SKI OR DIE
Electronic Arts £24.99

Uppers – *Skate Or Die* but with snow. ***Downers*** – *Skate Or Die* but with snow. ***The Bottom Line*** – Fun (for a while) with friends, but basically an old fashioned, patchy collection of unimpressive sub games. ★

SKULL AND CROSSBONES
Domark £24.99

Uppers – It's all reasonably true to the coin-op. ***Downers*** – Pity it was so crap then, isn't it? ***The Bottom Line*** – You'd have more fun being keelhauled.★

SLIDERS
Palace £25.99



Uppers – Clean 3D isometric graphics, with loads of sporting and *Marble Madness* overtones thrown in for good measure. ***Downers*** – The result is frankly less enjoyable than it sounds. ***The Bottom Line*** – Buy yourself *Spindizzy Worlds* or *Speedball 2* instead. ★★

SMASH TV
Ocean £25.99

Uppers – At last – an Amiga version of the classic arcade game. A lifetime of gross-out ultraviolence awaits. ***Downers*** – It's a cut-down interpretation of the arcade original. ***The Bottom Line*** – A disappointment, but still a damn good game. ★★★★

SPACE 1889
Empire £30.99

Uppers – Another fine game in the MegaTraveller mould, with a a wonderfully imaginative plot. ***Downers*** – A touch too complicated and getting started is a pain. ***The Bottom Line*** – If it's your thing, it's worth a go. ★★★

SPEEDBALL II
Image Works £24.99

Uppers – The ultimate future sport game to date – fast, brutal, enormously playable. The Bitmaps' finest moment. ***Downers*** – Teams can be hard to tell apart in the heat of the action. ***The Bottom Line*** – Buy or die. ★★★★★

SPELLBOUND
Psyclapse £24.99

Uppers – Well-drawn backdrops, and, erm, the packaging is nice. ***Downers*** – Almost no in-game sound, practically nothing in the way of action. ***The Bottom Line*** – Hugely boring arcade adventure thing that's overpriced by £20. ★

SPIRIT OF EXCALIBUR
Virgin £24.99

Uppers – Plenty of variation, and it certainly all looks lovely. ***Downers*** – Pitifully slow, and the different sections don't really seem to gel together. ***The Bottom Line*** – If you've got a few hours to kill while you're waiting for a train, this is a game that you can load up without fear of it causing you to miss it. (On the other hand, standing on the platform might be more fun). ★★

SPOT
Leisure Genius £25.99

Uppers – Brilliantly-designed Othello based board game which still manages to offer something new and different (and even supports up to four players). ***Downers*** – The presentation lacks polish in places. ***The Bottom Line*** – A class board-like strategy act. ★★★★★

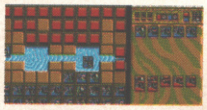
STELLAR 7
Dynamix (Sierra) £24.99

Uppers – Appealingly old-fashioned blast from the past in the form of (yet another!) up-dated *Battlezone*. ***Downers*** – Ever-so-slightly sluggish vector graphics and optimistic pricing. ***The Bottom Line*** – Satisfyingly mindless – but that's both a strength and a weakness. ★★

STORMBALL
Millennium £24.99

Uppers – Reasonably passable graphics. ***Downers*** – Utterly dire game design, no feeling of speed or excitement, highly confusing and largely pointless. ***The Bottom Line*** – If you're looking for a good way to waste £25, throw it down a drain rather than buy this. ★

STRATEGO
Accolade £25.99



Uppers – An engaging strategy bash for one player at least, it adheres to the rules and appearance of the board game remarkably well. ***Downers*** – The fact that it can only be a one player game takes all the fun out of it. ***The Bottom Line*** – A fun board game which can never really work on computer. ★★

STRIKER MANAGER
D&H Games £24.99

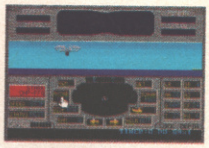
Uppers – From the people who brought you *Football Director* (yes, that's its only good point). ***Downers*** – Statistic frenzy with absolutely no gameplay whatsoever. ***The Bottom Line*** – Could push the boundaries of computer games backwards by ten years. ★

STRIP POKER DELUXE
CDS £24.99

Uppers – Can anybody think of any?

We can't. ***Downers*** – The poker game is rubbish, the graphics are flickery and all the girls are ugly anyway. ***The Bottom Line*** – If you want to see pictures of naked women there are better, cheaper and less sad ways of going about it. ★

STRIKE FLEET
Electronic Arts £29.99

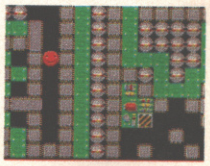


Uppers – Military freaks will enjoy the number of missions and the amazing array of hardware. ***Downers*** – Discerning gamers will be disappointed by the shallow nature of the gameplay. ***The Bottom Line*** – Not really what we've come to expect from Lucasfilm. ★★★

STUN RUNNER
Tengen (Domark) £24.99

Uppers – Er...the music isn't entirely crap. ***Downers*** – Hopelessly slow, graphically primitive, plus there's a very terminal lack of excitement. ***The Bottom Line*** – Crap in the extreme. ★

SUPAPLEX
Dream Factory £25.99

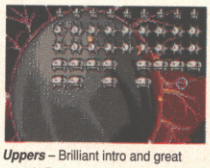


Uppers – The *Boulder Dash* game style makes a comeback. ***Downers*** – But all the magic has been removed and the levels are poorly designed. ***The Bottom Line*** – There are half-a-dozen PD *Boulder Dash* games better than this. ★

SUPER MONACO GP
US Gold £24.99

Uppers – Well-programmed and fun. ***Downers*** – Bears very little resemblance to the coin-op. ***The Bottom Line*** – A very good racing game, but don't expect the arcade. ★★★

SUPER SPACE INVADERS
Domark £25.99



Uppers – Brilliant intro and great sound. ***Downers*** – Incredibly slow, and closer in play to the original *Space Invaders* than the coin-op it's supposed to be a conversion of. ***The Bottom Line*** – Technically inept and extremely disappointing version of one of the year's most enjoyable arcade shoot-'em-ups. ★★

SUPER SKWEEK
Loriciel £19.99

Uppers – Cute *Defusion/Painter*-based game with power-ups and add-ons galore. ***Downers*** – Perhaps a little to French for most of us. ***The Bottom Line*** – Could do with having another fiver chopped off the price, but otherwise great fun. ★★★

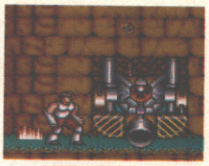
SUPER WONDER BOY
Activision £19.99

Uppers – Perfect difficulty curve lets you get just a little bit further every go. Cute graphics add to the charm and the shops where you can spend your gold give it a little extra scope. ***Downers*** – Slightly lacking in action, too slow for some. Not exactly modern looking. ***The Bottom Line*** – Great game in the *Mario* vein, but with less enemies and more depth. ★★★

SWAP
Palace £25.99

Uppers – Interesting and new idea for a puzzle game, programmed perfectly competently. ***Downers*** – It just isn't captivating, and never rises above the averageness. ***The Bottom Line*** – Fails to inspire any emotions at all. It's not good, it's not bad. It's just a bit bland. ★★

SWITCHBLADE II
Gremlin £25.99



Uppers – Gorgeous console-like graphics, tried-and-tested gameplay, packed full of detail and lovely touches. ***Downers*** – Perhaps just a little too simple. ***The Bottom Line*** – Absolutely superb. Arguably the best Amiga platform game to date. ★★★★★

SWIV
Storm £24.99

Uppers – Looks good, sounds good, comes with a neat two-player option – and all in one (massive) level too! ***Downers*** – There aren't any (unless you find all those drab military-style colours a bit depressing or don't actually like shoot-'em-ups at all). ***The Bottom Line*** – Frantic and fabulous– one of the best shoot-'em-ups we've seen. ★★★★★

SWORDS AND GALLEONS
Idea £25.99

Uppers – Uses the classic trading game style to great effect. ***Downers*** – Easy to complete and the stupid omission of a save game option. ***The Bottom Line*** –

A minority interest sort of affair. ★★

TANGRAM
Thalion £25.53

Uppers – Perfectly adequate computer translation of the classic Oriental puzzle. ***Downers*** – ... unfortunately it's a really dumb idea for a conversion, and the extras (time limit and suchlike) are intrusive and pointless. ***Bottom Line*** – Getting a real wooden Tangram set would be more fun, as well as much cheaper. ★

TETRIS
Infogrames £19.99

Uppers – Well, it is still *Tetris*. ***Downers*** – But it's probably the worst version yet seen on the Amiga, and that's saying something. ***The Bottom Line*** – Completely stinky. (Stick with the PD versions). ★

THEIR FINEST MISSIONS
US Gold £15.99

Uppers – A handy missions disk for *Their Finest Hour*, sure to prolong game life. ***Downers*** – It's really only for lazy people who can't be bothered to construct their own missions with the editor in the original game. ***The Bottom Line*** – Fine, but only if you've got the original (obviously). ★★★★

THEME PARK MYSTERY
Image Works £24.99

Uppers – Great feel; looks and sounds lovely. ***Downers*** – Arcade sections are fairly pointless. ***The Bottom Line*** – Games which mix adventures with arcade sequences always suffer for it. ★★

THE SECRET OF MONKEY ISLAND
US Gold £25.99

Uppers – The closest thing yet to a fully interactive story. Enormous playability, pleasing puzzles and great dollops of – yes! – genuinely witty humour come together to form something very glorious (and very different) indeed. ***Downers*** – Despite the five disks, you'll still need a full meg of ram, and once the game is completed you'll probably never come back to it again. ***The Bottom Line*** – An adventure that looks and plays better than almost any arcade game. Sheer software heaven. Destined for all-time classic status. ★★★★★

THUNDERJAWS
Domark £25.99

Uppers – Um...some quite nice cameo screens with cute babes. ***Downers*** – Crap graphics, crap sound, no gameplay and serious bugs. ***The Bottom Line*** – A poor-to-middling coin-op turns into an appalling Amiga game. A total waste of time and money. ★

TEAM SUZUKI
Gremlin £24.99

Uppers – Very fast, with some pretty hairy track views. Unintentionally hilarious replay feature. ***Downers*** – Insanely sensitive to control. ***The Bottom Line*** – Enough fun to keep you playing until you can at least stay on the road for five seconds at 60mph, but a bit too unrealistic to compete with *Indy 500*. ★★★

TEENAGE MUTANT HERO TURTLES
Image Works £24.99

Uppers – It doesn't have the word 'Ninja' in the title...***Downers*** – ...but even that doesn't save it from being utterly awful in every way. ***The Bottom Line*** – You'd have more fun playing with a real turtle. Or a real mutant. ★

TERMINATOR 2
Ocean £25.99

Uppers – You get exactly what you'll be expecting – Another Ocean Movie Licence With Lots Of Sub-Games And No Depth. ***Downers*** – Only one of the sub-games has any real merit of its own, and the rest are even worse than the norm for this kind of thing. ***The Bottom Line*** – Pretty hopeless run-of-the-mill effort for real diehard Arnie fans only. ★★

TOKI
Ocean £25.39

Uppers – The (latest) definitive coin-op conversion. ***Downers*** – The sound is slightly disappointing, and the game is simply too small. ***The Bottom Line*** – What's there is brilliant, if only there was more of it. ★★★★★

TOTAL RECALL
Ocean £24.99

Uppers – A fair bit of gameplay variation. ***Downers*** – Unfriendly controls, uninspired design. ***The Bottom Line*** – Solid but unexciting. ★★

TOURNAMENT GOLF
Elite £24.99

Uppers – Authentic arcade port. ***Downers*** – Nobody ever played the arcade game. ***The Bottom Line*** – Completely average golfing yawnerama. ★★

TOWER FRA
Thalion £24.99

Uppers – Yes, you guessed it, it's an air traffic control tower simulation. Not as boring as it sounds. ***Downers*** – It's still fairly boring though. ***The Bottom Line*** – Good training for the next generation of air traffic controllers. ★★

3D CONSTRUCTION KIT
Domark/Incentive £49.99

Uppers – Creating your own games (or simply designing little worlds) is great fun. ***Downers*** – Well, it's not really a game as such, is it? It's pretty slow too, and making anything really worthwhile gets very complicated. ***The Bottom Line*** – Expensive and of limited appeal, but if you've always itched to create a Freescape game you can't really complain. ★★★

TURRICAN 2
Rainbow Arts £24.99

Uppers – Enjoyable mindless blasting. ***Downers*** – Erm, has there been some mistake here? Someone appears to have sent us a copy of *Turrican*. ***The Bottom Line*** – Better than the original, but that's the only way in which it's different. ★★★

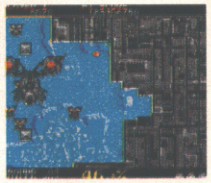
ULTIMA V
Origin (Mindscape) £29.99

Uppers – The scope and depth of *Ultima V* goes way beyond other role-playing adventures, even previous *Ultima* releases. ***Downers*** – Not a bit of joystick action in sight; some may find the size of the game daunting. ***The Bottom Line*** – *Ultima V* offers arguably the best in graphic fantasy (at least until *Ultima VI* comes along). ★★★★★

UNDER PRESSURE
Electronic Zoo £25.99

Uppers – Well, if you like the look of Psygnosis games, you'll like the look of this. ***Downers*** – The execrable walk-and-shoot gameplay would bore a five-year-old. ***The Bottom Line*** – If it's supposed to be a joke, it's very funny. If it's supposed to be an enjoyable game for £26, it's a very bad joke. ★

VOLFIED
Empire £25.99



Uppers – *Qix* was always a brilliant game, and this extremely close coin-op conversion adds to it without overwhelming it. ***Downers*** – Limited number of screens cuts down on its potential lifespan. ***The Bottom Line*** – A classic arcade game excellently converted, but you won't be playing it forever. ★★★

UMS II
Rainbird (MicroProse) £34.99

Uppers – The pinnacle of tech-head wargames, with more user-definable bits than you could ever need. ***Downers*** – Atrocious documentation could mentally scar beginners for life. ***The Bottom Line*** – It won't win the wargaming fraternity any new members, but it'll put some in seventh heaven. ★★★

UTOPIA
Gremlin £29.99

Uppers – The appeal of this kind of city-building thing is timeless, and the war side gives it a new dimension. ***Downers*** – ...but neither side is particularly well-designed, and it can easily end up a touch on the dull side. ***The Bottom Line*** – A good game, but it needs a lot more depth to make it a true classic. ★★★★

VECTOR CHAMPIONSHIP RUN
Impulze £24.99

Uppers – Pretty speedy. ***Downers*** – Uncontrollable. ***The Bottom Line*** – What's the point of a game you can't play? (c.f. Rhetorical Questions For Journalists, Vol. 1). ★

VIZ
Virgin £24.99

Uppers – Very true to the comic. ***Downers*** – Very shallow and limited. The jokes only really work the first time you see them. ***The Bottom Line*** – Fun while it lasts, but after the first couple of hours you've seen all it's got to offer. ★★

WARLOCK THE AVENGER
Millenium £24.99

Uppers – Playable and quite engrossing scrolling arcade adventure romp. ***Downers*** – An 8-bit game in 16-bit's clothing. ***The Bottom Line*** – *Druid* slightly updated for the 90s, and not by any stretch of the imagination worth £25. ★★

WARZONE
Core Design £20.99

Uppers – Graphics have a degree of character to them, and it's pretty tough. ***Downers*** – Adds very little to the hackneyed *Ikari Warriors* format. ***The Bottom Line*** – Competent but deadly dull shoot-'em-up that you've seen a dozen times before. ★★

WHITE SHARKS
Demonware £24.99

Uppers – Exceptionally good graphics, novel 'choose-your-own-power-ups' weapon system. ***Downers*** – Too fast to have any decent feel, and incredibly unimaginative. ***The Bottom Line*** – The game that put the 'bog standard' into 'bog standard shoot-'em-up'. Duff. ★★

WILDLIFE
MD Production £19.99

Uppers – Ideologically sound. ***Downers*** – *Operation Wolf* without shooting is like swimming without water. ***The Bottom Line*** – Utterly desperate. ★

WILD WHEELS
Ocean £25.99

Uppers – Attractive presentation and competent programming make *Wild Wheels* an appealing prospect. ***Downers*** – The whole concept is remarkably shaky, and simply proves unplayable. ***The Bottom Line*** – More like *Mediocre Wheels*, really. ★★

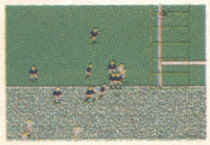
WONDERLAND
Virgin £24.95

Uppers – An evocative telling of the classic Lewis Carrol tale utilising a pretty advanced user-interface. ***Downers*** – Unless you've got a very powerful Amiga with a screen that can handle interlace, the whole thing is very unwieldy. It's not got the best parser in the world either. ***The Bottom Line*** – Brave, but after all the hype the product is something of a let-down. Not a patch on *Monkey Island*. ★★★

WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP SOCCER
Elite £24.99

Uppers – Very good copy of the coin-op (sob). ***Downers*** – Poor playability, you never get two seconds on the ball. ***The Bottom Line*** – Knocked out in the first round. ★★

WORLD CLASS RUGBY
Audiogenic £25.99

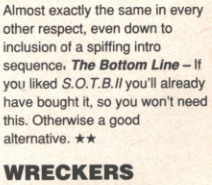


Uppers – The most accurate and technical representation of rugby we've seen. ***Downers*** – Unfortunately, the playability suffers, and the instant appeal is lacking. ***The Bottom Line*** – It has its virtues, but it doesn't quite pull it off. ★★★

WRATH OF THE DEMON
Readysoft £29.99

Uppers – Cheaper than *Shadow Of The Beast II*. ***Downers*** – Almost exactly the same in every other respect, even down to inclusion of a spiffing intro sequence. ***The Bottom Line*** – If you liked *S.O.T.B.II* you'll already have bought it, so you won't need this. Otherwise a good alternative. ★★

WRECKERS
Audiogenic £24.99

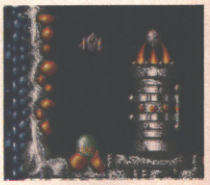


Uppers – Some refreshing game ideas add a new angle to the old 'aliens-overrun-space station' story. ***Downers*** – The whole thing feels far too much like an 8-bit game – right down to the colour schemes. ***The Bottom Line*** – All the elements of a good game are there – they just haven't been tied together properly. ★★

XIPHOS
Electronic Zoo £24.99

Uppers – Silky smooth and pretty darn subtle. ***Downers*** – Takes far too long to get into the action. ***The Bottom Line*** – Only for the dedicated space trader. ★★

ZARATHRUSTA
Hewson £24.99



Uppers – The *Thrust* gameplay is timeless, and it's been updated with 1990s graphics, resulting in something very special indeed. ***Downers*** – At heart though, it's still a game that used to sell for £1.99 going for £25, which isn't a bargain in anyone's language. ***The Bottom Line*** – Good fun, but to be honest, not really very good value. ★★★

ZIRIAX
The Software Business £24.99

Uppers – Pretty *Scramble* variant. ***Downers*** – Seriously overloaded in the difficulty department. ***The Bottom Line*** – Stupidly difficult, too much for almost everyone. More suited to a budget release. ★★

ZONE WARRIOR
Electronic Arts £25.99

Uppers – Well, you don't see many games of this style anymore. ***Downers*** – But that's a bit of a blessing really. ***The Bottom Line*** – Even the programmers of this trashy arcade adventure must have been left with an empty feeling. Avoid it at all costs. ★

Z-OUT
Rainbow Arts £24.99

Uppers – A huge improvement on *X-Out*. ***Downers*** – The horizontally scrolling shoot-'em-up with knobs on thing has already been done to death. ***The Bottom Line*** – A better *R-Type* than *R-Type*, but it isn't different enough to make it stand out from the crowd. ★★★

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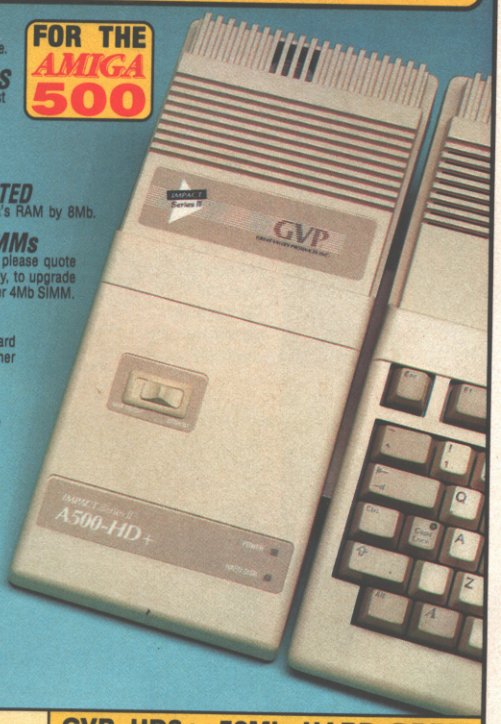

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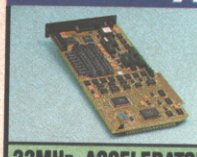

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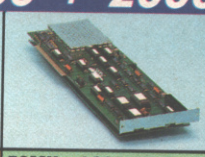

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BACK ISSUES

1 May 1991 Our very first issue! Big games like *Eye Of The Beholder, Gods* and *Cybercon III*, the first part of a gigantic *Rainbow Islands* player's guide, lots of chat from the Bitmap/Renegade crew and more! **On the disk:** *Bombuzal* – the complete game!

2 June 1991 And it just gets better! If you manage to get past the (ahem) swoony picture of Peter Molyneux on the cover you'll get to thrill to such treats as a giant Bullfrog interview and reviews of games like – yes! – *Monkey Island*! **On the disk:** *Kid Gloves* – the complete game!

3 July 1991 You want to know about Core Design? CDTV? *F-15 Strike Eagle II*? *Deuteros*? *Toki*? Then this issue is the place to come! It's even got our first 'In The Style Of...' in it! **On the disk:** brilliant *Exile* special world, *Prehistorik* preview, three typically excellent PD games!

4 August 1991 The Ultimate Autumn Preview, film games, The Assembly Line interviewed, *Jimmy White's Snooker* reviewed and more! **On the disk:** *Beast Busters, The Executioner* plus three PD games! **Plus!** Giant tips poster – *Kid Gloves* and *Bombuzal* solutions!

5 September 1991 Giant Gremlin Work In Progress feature, all the new god sims compared, DMA Design talk *Lemmings, Mega lo Mania, The Simpsons, Thunderhawk* reviewed. **On the disk:** *Barbarian II* demo, plus five (five!) great PD games!

6 October 1991 *Indy Atlantis*, and more – giant US Gold Work In Progress feature, *Midwinter II, Cruise For A Corpse, Magic Pockets* reviewed. **On the disk:** *Rolling Ronny, Captain Planet, Bullfrogger* and more! **Plus!** Five free AMIGA POWER postcards!

7 November 1991 *Monkey Island II, Young Indy Jones* – Lucasfilm tell all, World Of Commodore show, Bob Jacob of Cinemaware interviewed, *Formula 1 Grand Prix, Blues Brothers, Lotus II, Robocod* reviewed... **On the disk:** *Leander, Video Kid* plus PD games!

8 December1991 All I want for Xmas... seasonal hardware guide, giant Xmas compilations feature, reviews coming out of our ears (*Populous II, First Samurai, Heimdall, MicroProse Golf, Knights Of The Sky*...) **On the disk:** *Cisco Heat, Elvira Arcade*, best of PD!

9 January 1991 Giant FRP game feature, Code Masters interviewed, our Games Of The Year, reviews of *Smash TV, Birds Of Prey, Knightmare* and more! **Double disk issue!** Giant *Knights Of The Sky* entire training section, *Puggles* (great *Q-Bert*-style PD game).

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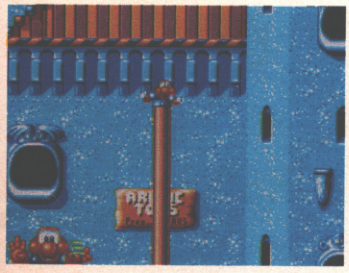

ROBOCOD

Many slick, fast arcade games are judged against the best 16-bit console stuff – *Robocod* is one that can actually stand such comparisons. Hilarious, original, superbly crafted, and if not quite as fast as *Sonic The Hedgehog, pretty* damn close, this is quite simply one of the best Amiga fun products of the past year. Superb!

AP rated 87 percent.

OH NO! MORE LEMMINGS!

The stand-alone, you-don't-need-the-original-game-to-play-it, version of Psygnosis' *Lemmings* almost-sequel. It's the same superb game design as the original – just more of it! As an (expensive) data disk it earned 82 percent – this one would have rated far more.

AP rated (at least) 82 percent.

CELTIC LEGENDS

'Celtic' like the Northern European race, not 'Celtic' like the football team, this stunning strategy/action/role-playing game has proved a shock hit in the AMIGA POWER offices – fans of the *Chaos*-style of gameplay will love it! Especially fun in two-player mode, this unusual hex-based game with arcade dynamics is gorgeous, atmospheric and fun!

AP rated 89 percent.

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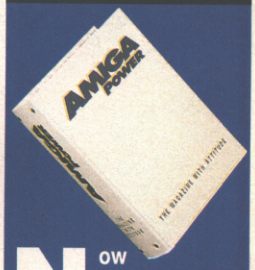

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2ND opinion

STEVE CARGILL OF THE BITMAP BROTHERS

It all depends on where you're sitting really. As a reviewer (or, indeed, a gameplayer) you might loath, nay detest, a game like *Ghostbusters II*, say, for its total lack of gameplay, but as a games creator you might actually show some grudging respect for it, centred on its neat parallax scrolling routine (or something). That's why here at the back of the mag we ask 'top industry professionals' to pick some of their favourite – and least favourite – games from the past year or so, just to see where they think we reviewers are going wrong...

Steve Cargill is one of the newer members of The Bitmap Brothers. You won't have seen his work anywhere yet – at least not with a Bitmap Brothers credit on it, and that's the only stuff he's admitting to at the moment – but you will. He's currently programming their new release *The Chaos Engine*, for instance. Though he claims not to play too many games, we managed to persuade him to comment on this little lot for us...

"Jimmy White: plays just like real snooker – or at least, it does most of the time!"

ALIEN BREED
Team 17

Alien Breed – stylish, action packed and very slick

A good looking game, but I don't think there's a lot of depth here to be honest – we're doing something quite similar looking with *The Chaos Engine*, so I know the game type – though, that said, it's a pretty good attempt at this sort of thing. It's certainly a slick piece of programming – the graphics are particularly impressive – but it could do with rather more happening, I think. I never felt lost or stuck in the game, which actually I'd prefer – it'd be better if it gave you more to worry about while playing.

F-29 RETALIATOR
Ocean

Flight sims are only good when they've got the right balance between playability and the heavier technical stuff. Games like, say, *MiG 29* bore me stupid – far too concerned with making everything realistic – but *F-29* has an arcade game feel which helps a great deal. It's the same guys who did this who are finishing off *Epic* for Ocean now, isn't it? Now that's one game I'm really looking forward to!

SUPER SPACE INVADERS
Domark

Sorry, not worth a comment really. It doesn't play well, doesn't have a nice feel to it, and could have been done a lot better. What can I say?

LEMMINGS
Psygnosis

This gets mentioned so many times by people writing things like this that I'll be brief. The best thing about this game is that it's not rehashing old ideas, or if it is it's doing it very subtly and cleverly. That's great, but the problem with totally new concepts like this one is that they're such a big risk – the game could be huge, or it could be a complete flop. The public can be quite conservative – there are lots of games that should have done better than they actually did, and sometimes even if the press love them the public won't buy. I always think of *The Sentinel* in those terms but there are plenty of others too.

Software companies are full of games that were somebody's great original idea, went someway down the road to completion and got cancelled because someone else realised the concept simply wouldn't work. All I'm trying to say is, coming up with a great concept like this isn't as easy as it looks.

LEANDER
Psygnosis

That's reviewed this issue, isn't it? From what I've seen it's a very nice piece of programming – this is another one that's trying to look like a console game, and I think they've succeeded – but it would appear that they've had to sacrifice a bit of gameplay to make it look so good. I'm not 100 percent sure why you couldn't have a game that looks this smooth and gives you rather more interesting things to do at the same time, but there you are.

ROBOCOD
Millennium

Robocod – we love it, but has he "overstretched" himself?

Sorry, I know you guys are *Robocod* fans, but I just can't stand it! The scroll rate is stupid for a start – to go for that console feel they've tried to get it scrolling very fast, but unfortunately every time they have more than a couple of sprites on screen the thing either slows right down, or goes incredibly jerky, or both. I think they should have admitted that this isn't a Mega Drive they're working with, and accepted the limitations of the machine. Keeping things moving at the same constant speed would have helped out for starters – they've overstretched themselves basically, and it's spoiled the game for me.

JIMMY WHITE'S WHIRLWIND SNOOKER
Virgin

This is great, a real Bitmap office favourite. It plays just like real snooker – or at least, it does most of the time! It does a couple of really curious things on later levels that I don't think've been mentioned in any of the mags before however, so here we go.

If the cue ball ends up in the jaws of a pocket with the computer player snookered he'll actually try to play the shot through the jaws of the pocket, not realising that there's something solid in the way. Of course, the ball will always bounce off the jaws and it'll be a foul shot. Also, one time I played a shot with lots of spin on it and the ball went off the table and travelled six to eight feet away where it stopped, just suspended in space. So what, you might say, having it hover in space isn't too bad – no, the weird thing is it actually allowed me to play the shot from that position!

I find it a great game to play while you're on the phone actually, where you can line up shots and take them as you're speaking to someone – you only need to half concentrate on it to enjoy the game!

FIRST SAMURAI
Vivid Image

Well, I've seen it, and yes, it's a nice game – a lot of work has obviously gone into the graphics particularly, but it plays well too. There are plenty of little bits and pieces flying across the screen all the time, which is nice. I found it a bit tricky to master the controls, but it's impressive stuff. Quite reminiscent of Psygnosis games in fact, but perhaps with more to it than some of their recent games.

SWIV
Storm

SWIV – yes, it's good, but is it really any better than Xenon II?

The best recent shoot-'em-up and I think on a level with *Xenon II*, though it's not significantly better than it, which is a bit sad really, seeing as *Xenon II* is a good 18 months older. Still, it's lots of fun – my favourite thing about it is the fact that it all comes in one massive level. You lose out on the excitement of completing an individual level, true, but I rather like the way that gives the game a very different sort of pace.

TERMINATOR 2
Ocean

This is the complete opposite to *Lemmings* – a classic case of a strong licence being used to ship out a terrible game. It does nobody any services because it makes people feel they've been cheated. If they think it's a waste of money buying games because they're not value for money – and putting a T-shirt in the box doesn't make a game good value for money – then people will start to either pirate games or stop playing them altogether, and whichever course they take, we all lose. ●

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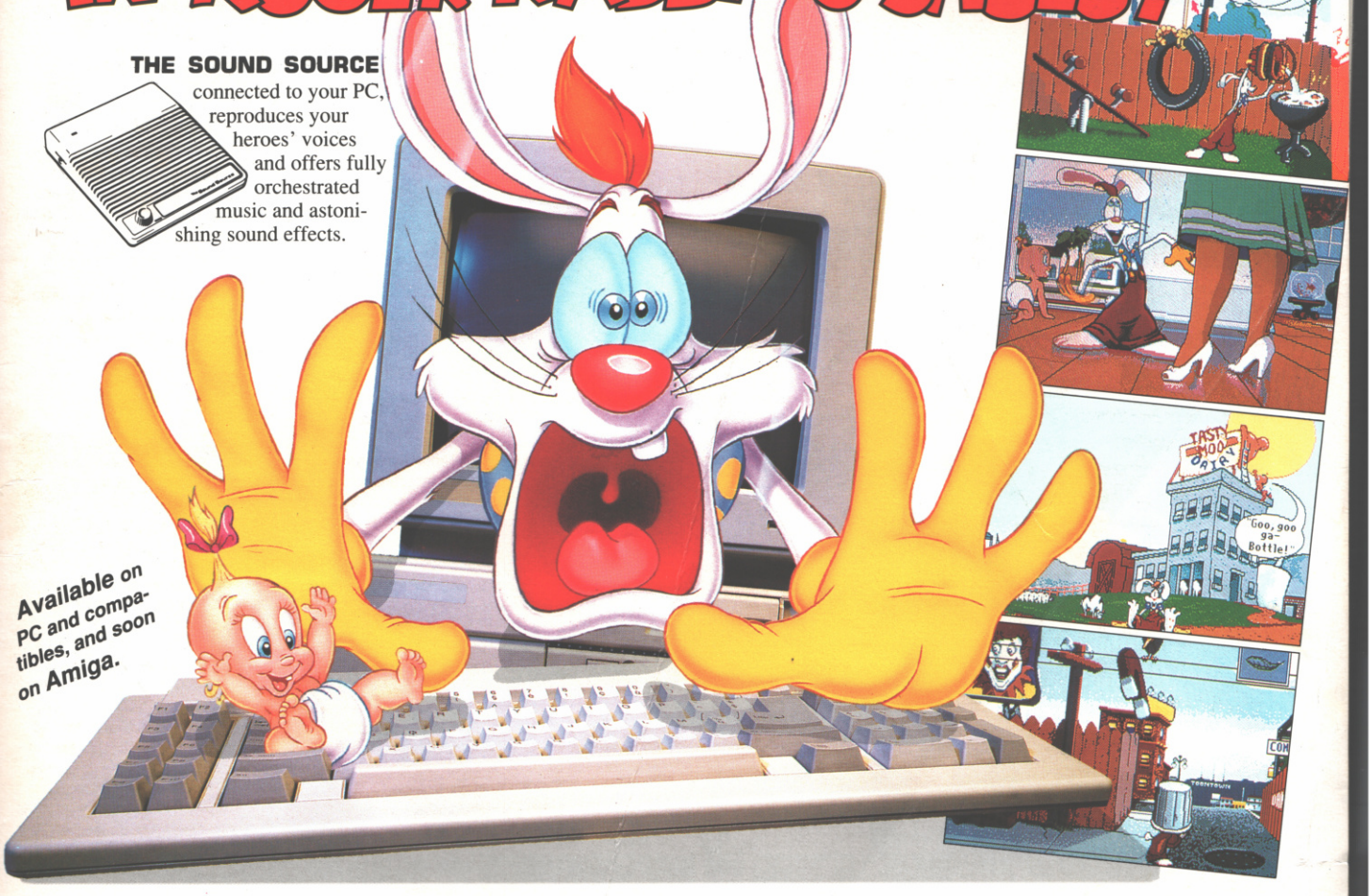

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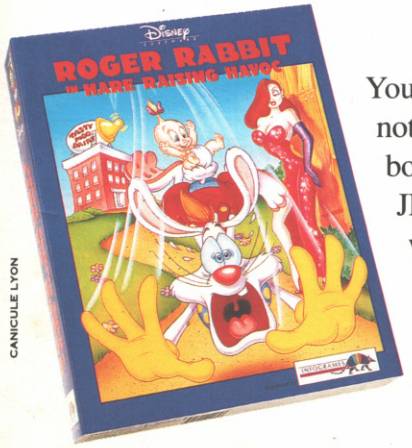

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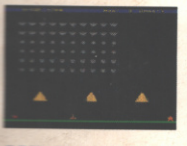
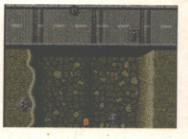


MR WOBBLY LEG VS THE INVADERS FROM SPACE

Ladies and gentlemen, place your bets!



RAID

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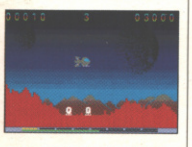

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